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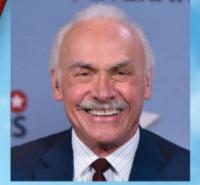
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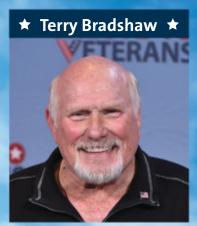
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U.S. Army Veteran, 4-time Champion, Pittsburgh



TV Host & Hall of Famer, 4-time Champion, Pittsburgh



U.S. Army Veteran, Honorary Captain, 2-time Champion, New York









U.S. Army Veteran, 2-time Pro Bowler, Baltimore



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50 YEARS OF TITLE IX



THEN AND NOW

A half century later, how far the quest for equality has come and where it still has to go



FORGOTTEN HEROES

In the early years, they challenged bias and resistance— and their impact is still being felt



AIAW VS. NCAA

For one decade, women's sports were governed by women. Then schools had to make a choice BY MARK BECHTEL



TORCH CARRIERS

These nine
leaders
are today's
inspiring,
influential
voices echoing
the spirit of
Title IX



NEXT FRONTIERS

The new issues that will dominate conversations and define the future of the fight for equality





RAFAEL NADAL

Now tennis's elder statesman, when he returns to Roland Garros, he'll also be the favorite BYL.JON WERTHEIM



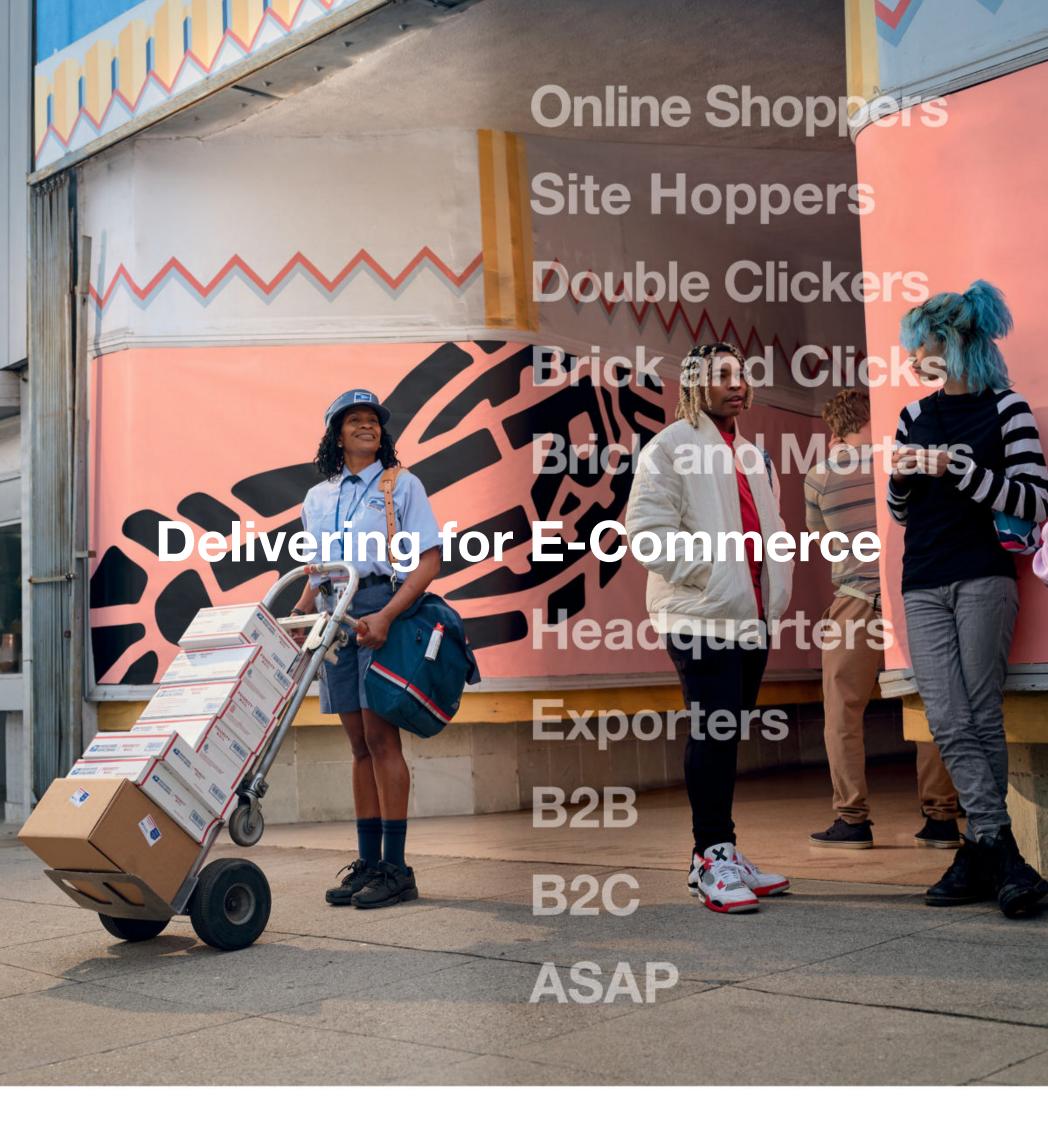


MAN MOUNTAIN DEAN

The pro wrestler who helped train U.S. intelligence officers to fight during World War II BY L. JON WERTHEIM



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EDITORS' LETTER

IX LIVES

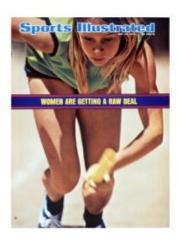
BY THE EDITORS OF SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

HE COVER of the May 28, 1973, issue of SPORTS ILLUSTRATED is still striking, with its close-up photo of an anonymous young female sprinter and jarringly direct headline: WOMEN ARE GETTING A RAW DEAL. That cover story was the first installment in a surprisingly forward-looking three-part series by SI on the state of women's sports. The key takeaways: In '73 gender inequity in funding and opportunity was rampant, as was chauvinism toward female athletes at all levels.

Some of the ground covered in the series is shocking; some is all too familiar. One thing today's reader can't help but notice is the absence of any mention of Title IX, the gender-equity education law that was signed a year earlier. No one then foresaw the impact it would have. Sometimes the seeds of revolution bloom slowly.

Now it's a given that Title IX has definitively shaped the modern sports landscape—we've had its 50th anniversary, and this issue, circled on our calendars for a while. We wanted this package of stories, overseen by Assistant Managing Editor Jamie Lisanti, to explore the history and future of Title IX. And we wanted the cover to capture the spirit of a law that in one way or another has impacted every woman in this country.

So this spring we asked readers at SI.com and on social media to submit photos embodying what Title IX means to them. SI Director of Photography Marguerite Schropp Lucarelli curated dozens of submissions featuring women of all ages, eras and levels, from Major League Baseball to rec-league soccer. You can see many of them







MOVING FORWARD

Leaders like Felix (middle) and initiatives like Pay With Change are creating progress that felt unlikely back in 1973 (top).

on this unique crowdsourced cover, alongside such sports icons as Billie Jean King, Allyson Felix and Pat Summitt. The Title IX effect runs deep, from sports' grass roots to their halls of fame.

As Big East commissioner Val Ackerman (page 16) and SI contributor Maggie Mertens (page 26) point out in their essays in this issue, the journey toward sports equity has come a long way, but there still is progress to be made. The same goes for SI, which is working toward equity in the stories we tell—all the time, not just around convenient anniversaries.

The spirit of evolution and empowerment is driving another key SPORTS ILLUSTRATED franchise. SI Swimsuit will unveil its 2022 issue and new digital content May 16, all of it powered by the new Pay With Change initiative: From now on SI Swim is partnering

only with sponsors that demonstrate a commitment to driving progress for women. These Changemaker brands include Hard Rock, Maybelline, the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Tourism, and Frida Mom. Every step toward equity counts, as the first 50 years of Title IX have shown us. Let's see how far we can go in the next 50.















SCORECARD

GAMEPLAN p. 18

FULL FRAME p. 20

SI EATS p. 22

FACES IN THE CROWD p. 24

TITLE IX AND ME

THE BIG EAST COMMISSIONER—WHO PLAYED HOOPS
AT VIRGINIA AND LATER WAS THE WNBA'S FIRST
PRESIDENT—HAS SEEN THE IMPACT OF THE LEGISLATION

BY VAL ACKERMAN

'VE SAVED just about everything. Since my journey in sports began almost exactly in parallel with the passage of Title IX 50 years ago, my souvenir collection has grown: newspaper clippings; cards; photos; game credentials; speeches I gave as the first president of the WNBA, the first woman to serve as president of USA Basketball and now commissioner of the Big East Conference; drawings that little girls in the stands handed me of their favorite WNBA stars—all that and more is stuffed in drawers, mounted in scrapbooks and piled up in boxes in my attic.

It's a little painful to go through some of it because the bits and pieces bring back such intense memories. Not necessarily bad memories but just such powerful memories of what we did (and how I was part of it), what we created, how far we've come and how far we have left to go.

I was 12 when Title IX went into effect. Old enough to have already spent years shooting baskets and tossing footballs and baseballs in the yard with my dad and just young enough to have barely felt the brunt of the sexism that the law was designed to combat. My mom and dad offered strong, unqualified support at every turn. When it came to the pursuit of our dreams, they treated my younger brother and me the same.

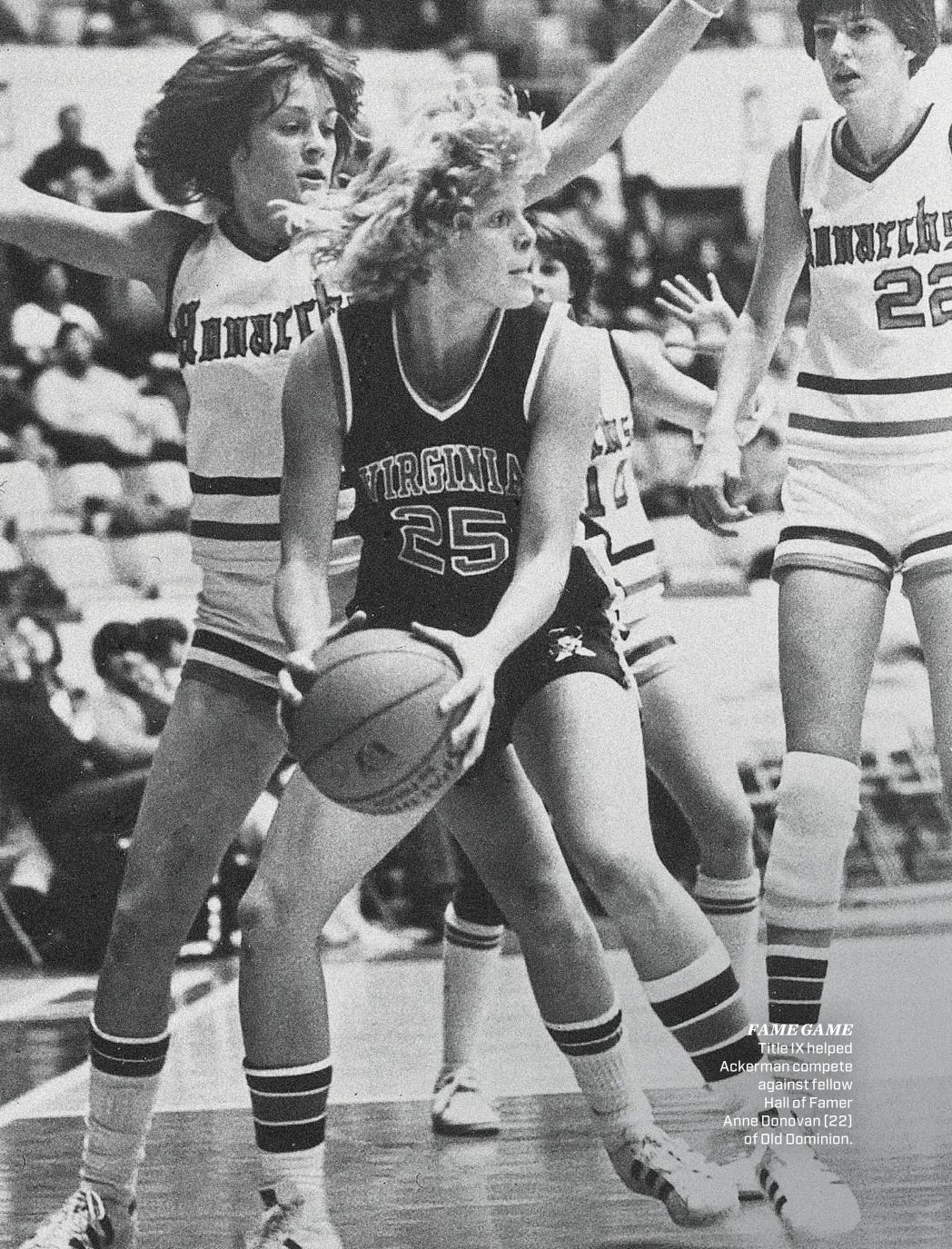
I competed in swim meets at the community pool in my hometown, but my sports opportunities otherwise were limited. In my junior high school, the only team offered for a sports-minded girl like me was cheerleading, and I didn't make the squad. I use it now as material in my speeches—"Haha, I'm just a frustrated cheerleader"—but it was humiliating at the time.

Then Title IX came to be. I started

high school, where my dad was the athletic director. It took little prompting for him to support and create girls teams. I played field hockey and basketball and ran track, and the landscape started to change.

When I arrived at the University of Virginia in 1977, seven years after the school began accepting women, it was harder to ignore the inequities that Title IX had only barely begun to correct. I was one of two partial-scholarship players my first year, because in those days the women's basketball team had only one full scholarship available for the entire team. We had little else: concrete locker-room floors, garish uniforms, no pregame meals, no air travel and only a handful of fans at our games.

But it was a stepping stone for me to play professional basketball in France after graduation, go on to law school and eventually work for the NBA as a staff attorney, my first job in sports. That's what not enough people talk about with Title IX: My debt-free education at a prestigious university and the career that followed were made possible by this transformational law, just like the educations and careers of thousands of female athletes in the decades that followed. In my current role in college sports, I cherish the





opportunity to continue that aspect of Title IX's legacy.

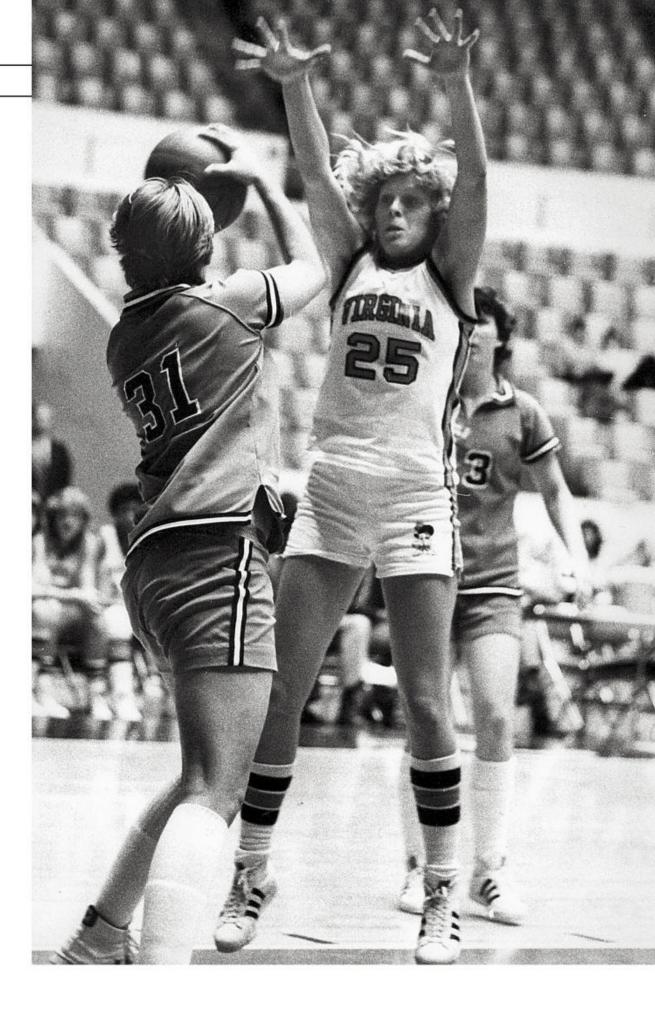
There have been plenty of victories and abundant progress made since 1972, but also setbacks. The inequities at the NCAA women's basketball tournament last year—widely publicized on social media—were among them. In most places, the resources available to women's sports teams still lag behind those the men enjoy. And three decades into my career, I still go to meetings in which I am the only woman in the room.

I've come to think about the expansion of women's and girls sports in four different categories. All of them have been influenced by Title IX. With every one of these, you can point to progress. And with every one, you can also talk about the work that remains.

The first is participation. The massive growth in this area just can't be denied: Many more girls and women play sports at every level today than they did 50 years ago. Though conditions aren't always equal, true parity is actually possible to imagine.

The second is women as spectators. I remember being part of fan development conversations in my early years at the NBA and asking: Are women watching? Are they buying our tickets and products? Should we market to them specifically? Now, men's and women's sports alike take for granted that women are part of their consumer bases and can (and do) root forcefully with their wallets. Title IX is at least partly the reason why.

The third is the emergence of women's professional leagues and highly competitive collegiate competition. Had there not been robust participation—enabled by Title IX—in the lower levels of women's sports, there



would not be a WNBA or an NWSL or the other pro leagues that seem certain to be formed in the future. Thanks to Title IX, women now also make up more than half of Team USA, with female Olympic participation picking up steam in many other nations as well.

The fourth is women in sports leadership. Women aren't just playing; they're key decision makers and are making their presence felt across the sports business spectrum, whether in leagues, college conferences, national governing bodies, networks and ownership groups or at the brands that are buying in. The example we've set in the U.S. is inspiring women athletes and leaders to press ahead globally as well, no easy feat in places where there is no legal counterpart to



CAVALIER ATTITUDE

A four-year starter at Virginia, Ackerman was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 2021 (above).

Title IX. Bold and forward-looking women, committed male allies and fast-moving social currents will remain the formula there.

I get frustrated with the naysayers who look at the challenges women's sports face today and say, "Oh, it's always been this way." No, it hasn't. There's a world of good now—much more than before. If anything, the women's sports community needs to do a better job of recording and honoring our history, our journey and our truths, both good and bad.

When I reflect on the story of women's sports in our country, I sometimes think about my grandmother, Barbara Radecky Voscek, who immigrated to the U.S. in the early 1900s from what is now Slovakia. She raised seven children (including my mom, the youngest), first in western Pennsylvania, where my grandfather worked as a coal miner, and then in a row house in Trenton, N.J., after Grandpop found work in an auto factory instead. Grandmom didn't speak English, so I never really got to know her, but I'm mesmerized—and inspired—to this day by her courage, her resourcefulness and the many sacrifices she made in search of a better life for herself and her family.

Women's sports have an analogous narrative—they've been propelled by people courageous enough to take chances and break down walls, who've been relentless in their quest for equality and respect and who were willing to be the first so that others could later reap the gains. To those who fought for Title IX and for every milestone since: I can hardly put into words my gratitude for your vision and determination. To the next generation of women athletes and leaders: Carry on, ladies. You've been given a start, but there's still plenty of groundbreaking, leading and fighting left to be done.

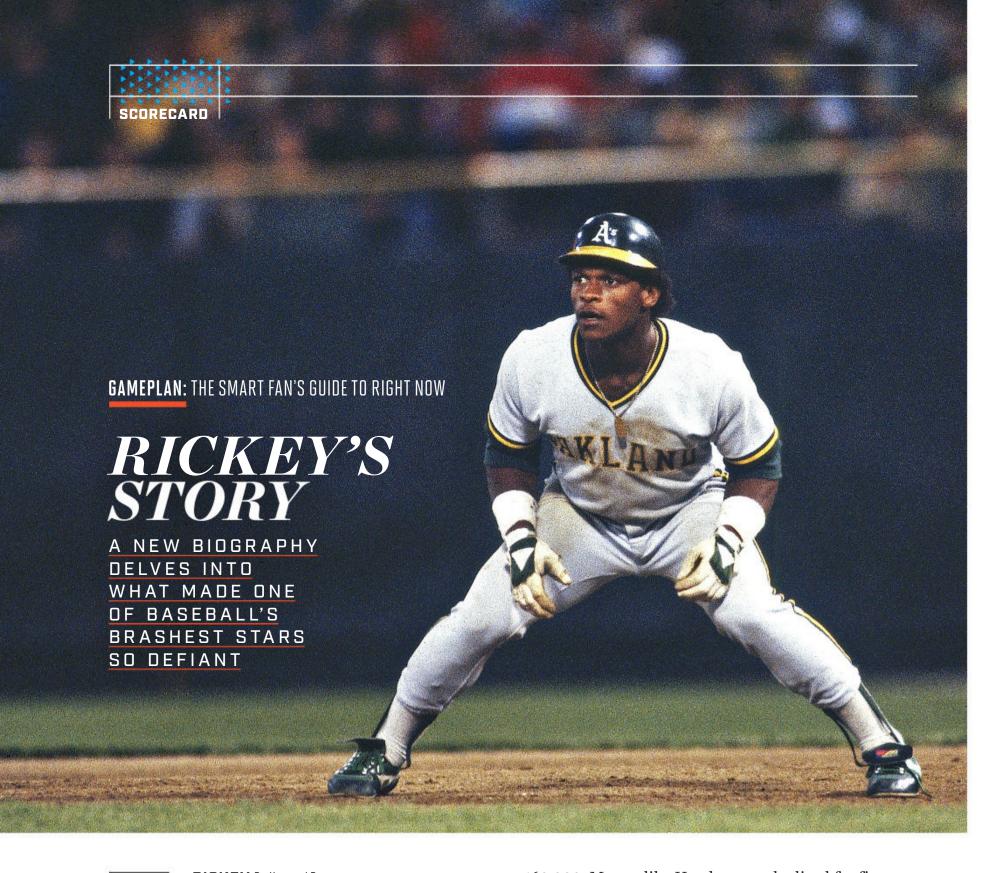
SI SPORTBOOK

CALIFORNIA ACTION

If you live in one of the 17 states that does not allow legalized sports gambling but would like to place a bet, there's one state to keep an eye on: California, where voters will have a chance this November to allow wagering. And there's a feeling within the industry that if it happens, the rest of the holdouts will follow. As Oklahoma State professor of legal studies John Holden told Politico, "A lot of people basically think the rest of the country will legalize if California does." Polls indicate 45% of California voters approve of legalized gamblingwith more than a quarter undecided. But the vote isn't a simple yes/no proposition. Rather, voters have to decide how they want to gamble, and that's the potential hangup.

At least two initiatives are expected to be on the ballot Nov. 8. One would allow only in-person betting at casinos on Native American lands and four horse tracks. The other—backed by DraftKings and FanDuel would allow gambling online and through apps. (It would earmark 85% of tax proceeds to homelessness and mental health services.] Supporters are expected to spend at least \$100 million, which is itself a gamble. If early ads are any indication, there will be plenty of negative campaigning, creating the possibility that, despite an appetite for legalized wagering, both measures could fail. —Mark Bechtel





RICKEY By Howard Bryant

READ

The first thing one notices upon picking up Howard Bryant's new book on Rickey Henderson is that the author nailed

the title: *Rickey*. What else could you call a book about the most notorious third-person-referencer in history, one whose outsized personality and place at the heart of countless wacky anecdotes make him the perfect subject for a biography?

But Bryant does much more than clear that admittedly low title bar, and he goes well beyond regurgitating all the Rickey stories out there. One of the foremost writers on the intersection of race and sports, Bryant spends large chunks of the book crafting what is almost a cultural history of baseball and the Black experience in Oakland. In 1940 the city had 8,462 Black residents. By 1980, when 21-year-old Henderson was entrenched as the A's leadoff hitter, that number had increased by 1,783%, to nearly

160,000. Many—like Henderson, who lived for five years in Arkansas—came from the South to find a city that had a long way to go when it came to race relations. (That applied to the A's as well. The Black scout who signed Henderson recounts how scouts were told to target players with single mothers, since they were easier to lowball on signing bonuses.) Around the time Henderson's family moved West, two other native Southerners in the Bay Area, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, formed the Black Panthers. Curt Flood, who also went to the Bay Area as part of the Great Migration, challenged baseball's reserve clause a few years later.

The atmosphere of defiance that he grew up in goes a long way in explaining Henderson's own brashness, which Bryant shows both helped and hindered him in his playing days. Seldom does a sports biography—especially a page-turner—so comprehensively explain the forces that made an icon the way they are. —M.B.



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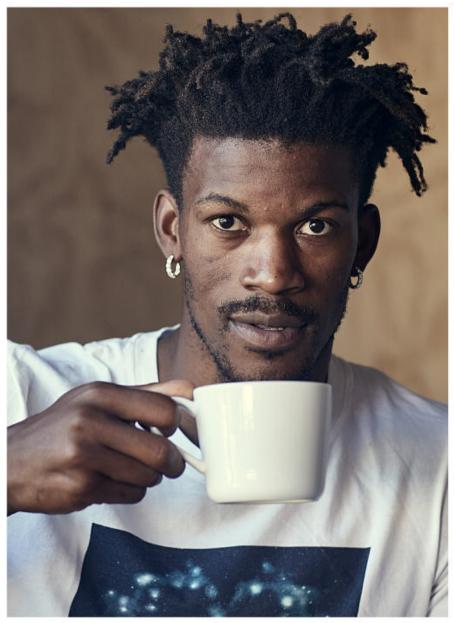
JIMMY'S JOE JONES

THE CAFFEINE-LOVING
FORWARD HAS TURNED HIS
COFFEE STAND INTO
A THRIVING ENTERPRISE

HEN HEAT STAR Jimmy Butler was leading his team to the NBA Finals in 2020, his coffee obsession was still more of an Orlando bubble quirk than a legitimate business. Since then, Butler has actually started selling his own beans (and merch) under his Big Face Coffee label. It started as a way to price-gouge a captive (and wealthy) clientele whose per diem came in big bills; his cheapest cup was \$20, but if someone paid with a \$100 bill he'd refuse to make change. (Big Face refers to the visages on the bills.) Now it has turned into one of Butler's many off-court interests and quite possibly a full-blown addiction. In mid-March, the six-time All-Star even set up a Big Face pop-up at the ATP Miami Open, with Butler himself getting behind the counter and whipping up lattes for VIPs and tournament entrants. (The prices were a little more affordable this time, with drinks starting at around eight bucks and a full flight for \$20.)

Butler can't even remember the last day he didn't drink coffee. "Could I do it? Yes. Do I want to do it? No," he says, adding, "Do I want to try to do it? No. Do I think about doing it? No. Could I do it? Yes. But I'm not."

Butler's coffee habit is a part of his pregame routine. He drinks seven to 10 cups a day, starting right after he wakes up. He has it at breakfast, at the team meeting, at



lunch and right before tip-off. At home, he likes to whip up coffees himself. (Butler has even been practicing latte art for more than two years now.) On the road, he likes to explore local shops with his friends, with suggestions that have come from the comments on the Big Face Instagram page. And he welcomes all variations into his routine. "There's no coffee that I or everybody around me won't drink," Butler says.

For Butler, the best thing about coffee is not necessarily the drink itself; instead it's the conversations shared over a cup. He still has some Heat members he needs to sip with (team president Pat Riley included). When asked who his dream coffee shop hang would be, Butler is all over the board: "I would definitely pick Neymar; I'm a huge fan. I would pick Barack Obama. And then lastly, I would pick Emma Raducanu. She's a young baller. She's a monster. If I could share a cup with those three, I think I'd be having a great time." —Rohan Nadkarni





FACES IN THE CROWD

▶ Photograph by **KEVIN D. LILES**

BETTY LINDBERG

Birthplace: Parkers Prairie, Minn.

Hometown: Atlanta

Date of Birth: Sept. 7, 1924

Sport: Distance Running

Mile World Record (ages 90-94): 15:15.58

• MOST WEEKS Betty Lindberg has a nearly full training schedule. The 97-year-old spends Mondays and Tuesdays doing weight training and floor exercises at the gym. She walks around the neighborhood on Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays. Saturdays are her main rest days, which she usually spends tending to her curly gray hair at the salon.

But on Feb. 26, Lindberg canceled

her usual Saturday appointment for good reason: She was busy setting a new 95–99 age-group world record at the USATF Masters 5K Championships in Atlanta, finishing in 54:46.7 and besting the previous mark by more than 30 minutes.

"I have to say yes, I was confident," Lindberg says. "But I had no idea I'd do it in 55 minutes."

Lindberg stumbled into running



when she was 63. Her daughter and son-in-law asked whether she could drive them to Atlanta's Peachtree Road Race on the Fourth of July. Lindberg couldn't understand why anyone would wake up early to run on a holiday, but she drove them anyway, stayed and watched the older age groups run the world's largest 10K for fun. She thought she could do it, too, so she did.

She set her first age-group best at 91 in the 800 meters, and since then she has looked up what time she needs to beat to set a record ahead of her next race. Lindberg, who became a great grandmother in December, will run the 5K at nationals again next year, hoping to finish in 54 minutes. She might take a mid-race pitstop to hug her granddaughter as she did in February, but she'll never stop; she's never quit a race before.

"I've always finished whatever
I've started," Lindberg says. "As
hard as it can be, or as poorly as
I'm doing, I'm going to finish the
thing."

—Matthew Boncosky

SWIMMING

THRICE AS NICE

► IN FEBRUARY,

junior swimmer
Kate Douglass won
three solo titles at the
ACC championships
and anchored Virginia
to an NCAA record
in the 400-yard
medley relay.

Four weeks later, at the NCAA women's championship in Atlanta, she became the first to win three titles in three strokes, setting U.S. records in the 50-meter free, 100-meter fly and 200-meter breaststroke.



Her wins capped a whirlwind tour, which began last June at the U.S. Olympic Trials, where she qualified for the team by a 0.02-second margin. Douglass earned bronze at the Tokyo Games in the 200-meter IM

and four months
later won two relay
golds at the Short
Course World
Championships in
Abu Dhabi. "It's still
surreal," she says.
"I don't know if I've
fully processed
everything that
has happened."
—Patrick Andres



CARMEN ALDER Sport: Track and Field Hometown: Southern Pines, N.C.

Alder, a freshman distance runner at Brigham Young, ran a 4:16.30 in the 1,500 meters at the Stanford Invitational, finishing second and breaking the Ecuadorian national record set by her mother, Janeth Caizalitín, in 1990. An 11-time high school track and field and cross-country state champion, Alder holds North Carolina's high school 5K record (16:58.90).



CALEB HARRIS Sport: Weightlifting Hometown: Brookhaven, Miss.

Harris, a senior at Brookhaven High, deadlifted a record 735 pounds at the Mississippi High School Powerlifting Championships, the state's best all-time mark regardless of weight class or school division. He will play defensive tackle for East Central Community College in the fall.

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For more on outstanding amateur athletes, follow **@Faces_SI** on Twitter.





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In 1972 no one dreamed a dry, 37-word clause tucked inside new education legislation would reshape women's sports forever.

A HALF CENTURY

later, it's time to reflect on how far the quest for equality has come—and where it still has to go

BY MAGGIE MERTENS
ILLUSTRATION BY
GABRIELA BURY

OR WOMEN of my generation, born a decade or more after Title IX was passed, the law had an almost mythical air. I often heard it referred to vaguely to explain why every girl I knew played some kind of sport. I doubt whether anyone my age could quote or explain Title IX, but there was a sense that at some point before us, something had changed that allowed all of us to play sports in ways our mothers mostly hadn't.

This understanding manifested in many communities as a kind of frenzy when it came to certain girls sports. In my hometown in suburban Seattle, it was soccer. The sport was so popular when I was growing up that I never even made a school team, despite playing from age 6 to 18—the competition was that fierce. It wasn't for lack of love, though, or competitiveness on my part. I still remember my very first game, bunch-ball though it probably was. I felt like I had been plugged in; energy buzzed through my limbs.

When I didn't make the school soccer team, I joined cross-country instead, using the endurance I built on the field to race for miles. My friends did track and field, or played softball, basketball or volleyball. Where I grew up, whether you were super athletic, artsy, nerdy, popular, goth or punk, sports were just part of the fabric of our childhoods.

Sometimes, though, we heard whispers of another reality. Just a generation earlier, girls sports in much of the country hadn't even *existed*? Women's bodies were considered too weak to run long distances—so women like Bobbi Gibb and Kathrine Switzer had to sneak into marathons? Women could be rejected from a college because the school had already accepted its quota of two female applicants?

That pre–Title IX world seemed like a fairy tale to me and my friends. But the photos populating this magazine's cover today are proof of the tidal wave of change that swept across this country over the last 50 years, crashing over my own life and those of countless other women.

On June 23, 1972, then President Richard Nixon signed the Education Amendments Act. The law's Title IX, which recognized gender equity in education as a civil right, altered women's sports forever. That massive shift was, in part, an accident. After all, nowhere in the law did the words *sport* or *athletics* or even *physical education* appear.

Instead, the law was written and lobbied for as a means to address vast gender inequality and sex discrimination in education. At the time, college student bodies and faculties were still majority male. In 1970 just 59% of women in the U.S. graduated from high school, and just 8% had college degrees. Institutions like the Cornell School of Veterinary Medicine enrolled only two women a year. Some schools required women to have higher grades than men to be admitted, while others restricted the subjects women could study. When Bernice Sandler, known to her friends as Bunny, finished up her Ed.D. in counseling at the University of Maryland in '69, she was told she wouldn't be hired there for a full-time teaching job because she came on "too strong for a woman." At the time, all of this was legal.

Sandler scoured federal law for some kind of action she could take and found an executive order from then President Lyndon B. Johnson that disallowed discrimination on the basis of sex for organizations that accepted federal contracts—like, for instance, many universities. She gathered examples of discrimination at institutions



TEAM FIRST

Nearly 80 years before Title IX, the Smith College hoops team offered a glimpse of the future for competitive women's sports.

across the country and shared her research with Representative Edith Green, a Democrat from Oregon, who held seven days of congressional hearings on sex discrimination in education in 1970. The hearings revealed stories of women who weren't paid to teach because their husbands got a salary, or harassed out of engineering programs, or told they were too pretty to take difficult classes. These hearings laid the groundwork for Title IX, and Sandler, who died in 2019, became the law's "godmother."

But those taking part in the hearings "were absolutely not talking about sports," says Susan Ware, the author of *Title IX: A Brief History With Documents*. Not once were women's college athletics brought up. "The initial supporters [of Title IX] were just as surprised as the athletic



departments when it became clear that this law would also apply to sports programs."

It didn't take long for sports to become the rallying point to raise support for the new law of the land. While chauvinistic administrations could devise excuses for the lack of women faculty in an English department, funding for school sports was different. "What is so crystal clear about athletics is, you look at these budgets, and if women get 1% of what the men get, it's such a clear case of discrimination," Ware says.

Controversy erupted. Men's coaches and athletic directors claimed equal budgets for men's and women's sports would spell the end of men's sports as we know it. Many schools failed to act until regulations were finalized in 1988, covering athletics and all programs in higher education.

NA SPRING day in 1893, students at Smith College in Northampton, Mass., filled the gym, dressed in their school colors. Senda Berenson, the director of physical education, had set up a match

between the first- and second-year classes at the women's college, to play a game recently invented by a physical education teacher up the road in Springfield named James Naismith.

Never before had women played a sport like this, in teams. The entire student body turned out to watch the first women's basketball game.

Nine women on each team stood on the floor wearing bloomers, billowy pants that cut off below the knee and dark stockings pulled up below. Some rolled up their long sleeves to the elbow on thick, dark fabric of their blouses covered by a square sailor-style collar.

The game went on for two 15-minute halves—as per the rules of Naismith's game, which Berenson had adjusted for her female stu-

"THE INITIAL **SUPPORTERS** [OF TITLE IX] WERE JUST AS SURPRISED AS THE ATHLETIC **DEPARTMENTS** WHEN IT **BECAME CLEAR THAT** THIS LAW **WOULD ALSO** APPLY TO **SPORTS** PROGRAMS," SAYS WARE.

dents. Unlike his version, her players couldn't dribble more than three times, and running was cut down by having players stay in certain zones of the floor. They shot a soccer ball through two peach baskets pinned to a backboard made of chicken wire. The cheering and screaming of the spectators was a high-pitched sound I do believe no one had ever heard before and was deafening, Berenson remembered later.

The students were hooked.

Each year, the championship game between the school's best two classes turned out almost the entire campus. Berenson became known as the first expert on women's basketball. But despite the student body's enthusiasm for the game, Berenson refused invitations for intercollegiate play. She believed allowing women to play sports as men did—competitively—would become "a menace to real physical education for women."

M

EANWHILE, ACROSS the country, the women at Stanford, founded in 1891 as a coeducational university, took it upon themselves to set up competitions. Some undergraduates organized a basketball game against Cal in

1896. The teams played in front of a crowd of 500 women—men weren't allowed to attend—at the San Francisco Armory. Playing by Berenson's rules, the game ended in a 2–1 Stanford victory. All points were scored on free throws.

But rather than embrace women on campus and the new sport's glimmer of gender equality, Stanford and other schools retreated, fearing that the increasing number of women enrolling were making the schools too feminized. The school limited female enrollment to 500. Later, when the school was bleeding money during the Great Depression and having to turn away thousands of qualified female applicants each

ratio: 60% men and 40% women.

Like many big universities looking for a higher profile in the early 20th century, Stanford doubled down on its masculine ideology and turned its attention toward bolstering its men's athletic programs. Women undergraduates hated the new system of having only what the school called "sociable play days." They wanted real competition and a new gym. By 1947 the women's physical education department allowed intercollegiate sports for women but offered very little funding.

year, they changed the cap to a gender

In 1974, two years after the passage of Title IX, Mariah Burton Nelson accepted an offer of admission from Stanford, eager to play college basketball. "I knew Stanford did not have a strong program and said so to Fred Hargadon, then the dean of admissions, who recruited me," Nelson says. "He told me he wanted me 'to help build the program.'"

Coached by a volunteer graduate student, the team played in a tiny practice gym where 20 or so fans would watch

games from a single bench. They wore white T-shirts with masking-taped numbers as uniforms. The team wasn't allowed to use the weight room. While they played an 11-game season, the Stanford men's team played 25 games in a brand-new gym, Maples Pavilion, and most of the team had full scholarships.

Though the enforcement guidelines for Title IX in sports had yet to be finalized, the new law was a fillip. Nelson and two teammates, Sonia Jarvis and Stephanie Erickson, staged three-person sit-ins in the athletic director's office, refusing to leave until he heard their demands for the same resources the men had. By Nelson's junior year, the athletic department had hired two paid women's basketball coaches, Dotty McCrea and Sue Rojcewicz. Players received real uniforms, access to the weight room and got to play in "the men's gym." By her senior year, they even had a scholarship athlete.

The snowball Nelson pushed down from the top of the mountain at Stanford gained momentum quickly. McCrea and Rojcewicz remained at the school until 1985, when Stanford hired Tara VanDerveer. Five years later, Stanford won its first women's basketball national championship. Today, VanDerveer has the most wins in women's college basketball history and is paid upward of \$2 million a year. She took home the 2021 title in front of four million TV viewers, more than the average NBA playoff game. And this year's NCAA women's basketball tournament was expanded to a 68-team field (equal to the men's) and used the March Madness branding for the first time.

Progress, when it comes to Title IX, can seem obvious. It's easy to imagine that it might also be bittersweet for athletes of earlier eras





PATH PAVERS

The momentum
of Title IX helped
VanDerveer (in 2021),
Stanford (1990) and
South Carolina (2022)
win national titles.

to see today's women have opportunities they never had. Yet to Nelson, this vastly different world doesn't cast a shadow over her own experience—it brings her joy. When Stanford loses, her friends check in to see whether she's upset. "Heck no. Women's basketball itself is winning. That's what I'm rooting for," she says.

HE PURSUIT of equality is more like an ultramarathon than a road race. There are twists and turns and long stretches when we aren't sure we're going in the right direction. Even today, athletic

opportunities at most schools are still not equitable. "The amount of change in women's sports really is transformational," says Ware. "But it started from zero; that's the perspective, so getting to 40% [of athletic budgets], that's a lot of progress—the needle just got stuck."

When Nelson spoke at a Title IX anniversary event at the Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport at the University of Minnesota in 2002, she cited the need for fairer implementation of the law. The campus newspaper covering the event quoted a men's wrestling coach who wasn't pleased with her speech. "A lot of the stuff is very slanted. . . . The Tucker Center has an agenda. The feminist agenda doesn't look at the data: Title IX is killing men's sports," he said.

Two decades later that fear is still well worn, with athletic directors and coaches from 1972 to today claiming that big moneymakers for schools like men's football and basketball shouldn't have to share money with less profitable (read: women's) sports. According to a 2022



report from the Pew Research Center, men are more likely than women to say funding should be based on the amount of money brought in by the team (30% vs. 14%, respectively). Even now, says Ware, often when she discusses Title IX compliance, it's presented like a zero-sum game: "If women win, then men lose. And Title IX gets blamed for everything, especially in the athletic department when there are hard choices that need to be made."

When Title IX was passed, even high-level intercollegiate sports were often niche and regionally popular. Today, college sports are a multibillion-dollar fixture of the national sports entertainment industry—and a source of complaints about excess commercialization, abuse of an unpaid labor force and of academic institutions allowing a cash spigot to take them far away from their educational mission.

Here, too, Title IX plays a role. The legal requirement to field women's teams gives universities cover for the commercialization of football and other men's programs. In some cases, the law "has provided a shield of the ratcheting up of making money to subsidize other sports," says Victoria Jackson, a historian at Arizona State and former professional runner.

As college athletes have won the right to be paid through name, image and likeness deals, one thing that's become clear is women's teams may be worth more than we've been led to believe. How else do you explain women's college basketball ranking second in NIL deals, behind football, according to a study by NIL company Opendorse?

WHEN **STANFORD** LOSES. FRIENDS ASK WHETHER NELSON IS UPSET. "HECK NO." SHE SAYS. "WOMEN'S **BASKETBALL ITSELF** IS WINNING. THAT'S WHAT I'M ROOTING FOR."

Even if athletic budgets at every school in the nation was equal for men and women, there still wouldn't be true equal access. High schools in this country are still largely racially segregated, and those with majority students of color have fewer resources and sports teams. Even at majority-white schools, girls typically have only 82% of the sports opportunities that boys have; at schools where students of color make up the majority, that number drops to 67%, according to the National Women's Law Center.

A

1973 ARTICLE in this magazine detailed the vast inequities faced by women athletes. In some

ways, it sounds like ancient history: A 1969 Syracuse school budget earmarked \$90,000 for boys sports and \$200 for girls.

The article goes on to describe an account from LPGA golfer Jo Ann Prentice, on the gossip about her sex life: "The vicious paradox that Prentice outlines—women athletes are either heterosexual wantons or homosexual perverts or, simultaneously, both—is the culmination of all the jokes and warnings that began when an 11-year-old wanted to play sandlot football with her brother and was teased, in good fun, about being a tomboy."

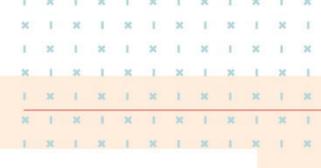
While progress in funding for women's athletic programs is easy to gauge, more difficult are those attitudes toward women athletes: the old, offensive stereotypes holding that they must be unnatural in some way and are certainly not to be deified in the same way we do men.

In professional sports, this tension plays out constantly. The U.S. women's national soccer team took its own employer to court over equal pay, reaching a settlement in 2022 after years of wrangling. The WNBA prohibits charter flights to away games. And the NWSL has been embroiled in controversy over widespread allegations of abuse, harassment and low pay.

In the college basketball ranks, it took Sedona Prince's now infamous TikTok video to expose the inequities in the facilities. Nearly 50 years after Nelson's team at Stanford was denied access to the weight room, the treatment was essentially the same. But this time, people cared.

Though not universal, maybe it's these shifts in how women are viewed that are the truly celebratory results of Title IX. Women can be record breakers, broadcasters and coaches. Women's teams can make money. Women deserve respect no matter what they choose to study, teach or play, or whether they're gay, straight, bi or trans.

Title IX has never been and never will be just about sports. But women's sports have never been just about sports, either. As anyone who's played or watched knows—it's about a whole lot more.







WHERE WE'VE BEEN



WHERE WE ARE

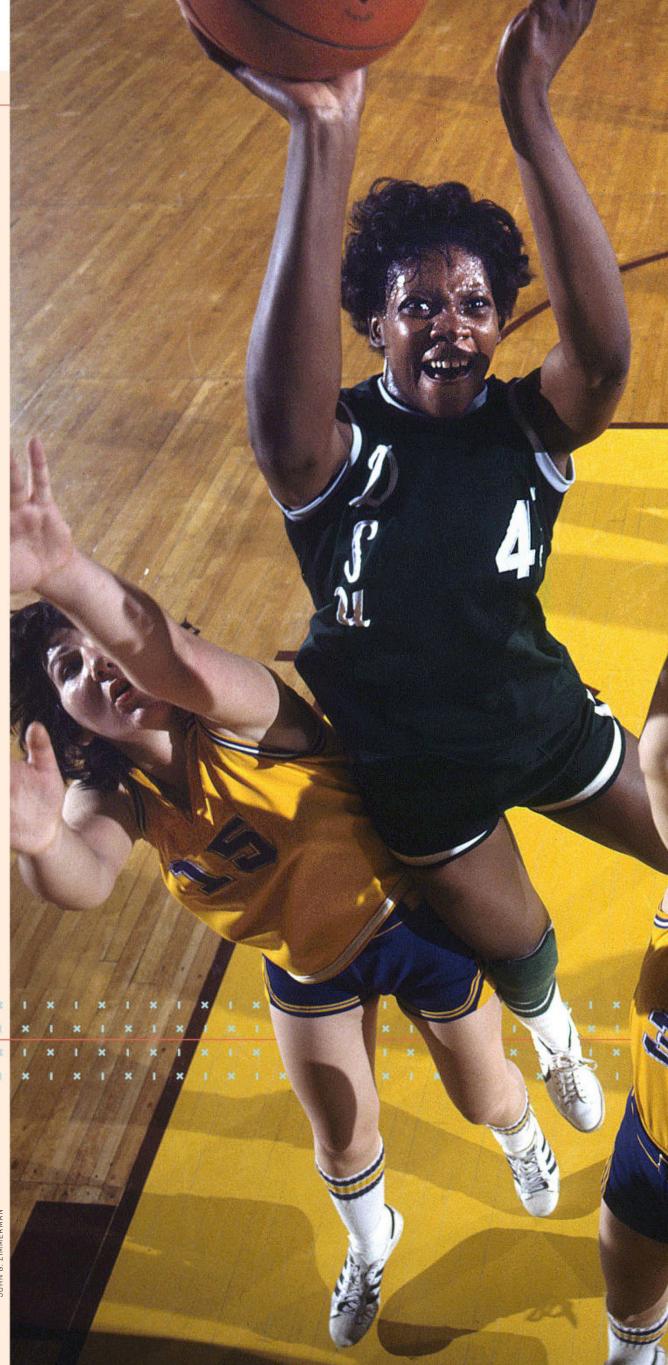


WHERE WE'RE HEADING

Title IX radically altered the sports landscape, but not all at once and not without resistance. In the early years of the statute, the

FORGOTTEN HEROES

challenged bias and championed equality— and the impact is still felt today







LUSIA HARRIS

BASKETBALL

A lifelong gym rat who had parlayed her hoops passion into a career as a player and coach, Jenny Boucek was 33 before she discovered the pioneer who arguably made it all possible.

That would be Lusia Harris: the first woman to score a basket in the Olympics (1976), the only woman ever drafted by an NBA team ('77) and the first female college player inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame ('92). Harris was, by many accounts, the first truly dominant player of the women's game, a key trailblazer in the sport, though unknown to the generations who followed her.

Boucek, a college star at Virginia who played in the WNBA's inaugural season, didn't learn about Harris until 2007, after becoming coach of the league's now defunct Sacramento Monarchs. After a lifetime of doing drills named for men, Boucek set out to recast her playbook by honoring legends of the women's game. She promptly named a post drill after Harris, in hopes that her young players would gain a better appreciation for those who paved the way. "It's something that we all have to be intentional about," says Boucek, now an assistant coach with the NBA's Pacers.

It wasn't until this past year that Harris finally broke into mainstream consciousness, via the

AFTER COLLEGE,
HARRIS WANTED TO KEEP
PLAYING BASKETBALL,
BUTTHERE WERE FEW OPTIONS
FOR THE THREE-TIME
NATIONAL CHAMP.

22-minute documentary *The Queen of Basketball*, which debuted in 2021 and won an Oscar in March. The film was aided by the promotional muscle of its executive producers: Shaquille O'Neal and Stephen Curry.

In the documentary, Harris narrates her own story, as the daughter of Mississippi sharecroppers who stayed up late watching highlights of Bill Russell, Wilt Chamberlain and her idol, Oscar Robertson. She grew to be 6' 3", the tallest in her high school class, and later—in the wake of Title IX—starred at Delta State, leading her team to three straight national championships.

After college, Harris says in the film, "I wanted to keep playing. But there was no place to go." Though New Orleans picked her in the seventh round of the 1977 NBA draft, Harris felt she wasn't "good enough" and declined an invitation to training camp—a decision that surely contributed to her relative anonymity in the decades that followed.

"She was so good she got drafted by the Jazz. I was like, 'Hold on, how come I never heard of this lady?' " says O'Neal, who showed the film to his basketball-playing daughter, Me'Arah, as a means for inspiring her to greater dominance. He calls Harris "unapologetically legendary."

Harris died in January, at age 66. She lived long enough to see the women's game grow and thrive, to witness the birth of the WNBA and to watch the stars of today enjoy the fame, commercial opportunities and career paths that were denied to her generation. That's what struck former WNBA player and current Notre Dame coach Niele Ivey when she screened the film with her own players.

"It just shows how fortunate we are that we had a league to play in after college," says Ivey. "Because so many women before us didn't have the opportunity."

—Howard Beck





1985 U.S. WOMEN'S NATIONAL TEAM

SOCCER

The stewardess—that's what they were known as then—on the Alitalia 747 flight from Milan to New York approached the women sitting in coach. "The pilot said there's women's football players aboard," she said, "and he wants to meet you."

"I'm game," said Kim Wyant, who stood up and took her teammate, Linda Gancitano, with her.

It was late August 1985. There were very few women's national soccer teams competing around the world. The sport wasn't part of the





Olympics; there was no Women's World Cup or other major tournaments.

But Gancitano and Wyant ascended the spiral staircase to the plane's upper cabin as members of the first U.S. women's national team. As they flew home, the squad's sweeper and goalkeeper thought of the stories they had to share from the magnificent adventure that had begun in Baton Rouge earlier that month, at the National Sports Festival, an off-year Olympics tune-up event that was the country's largest

gathering of elite amateur athletes. It was there that the two Florida natives and 15 other young women were unknowingly plucked from a pool of 70 top soccer players, competing against each other on teams representing four regions of the country, to be on the squad U.S. soccer officials were hastily assembling. Next, they traveled to Long Island for just three days of practice, and then onward to Jesolo, Italy, to compete in the Mundialito ("Little World Cup") against Denmark, England and the host nation.

Wyant's understudy, Ruth Harker, recalls being congratulated by a 17-year-old who'd failed to make the cut. "You f----' made it, man!" Brandi Chastain told her. Wyant says she had "no idea" of the trans-Atlantic journey that awaited them.

There were plenty more stories: of the expedited passport approvals; the daily \$10 stipend for food; the Dublin-bred coach, Mike Ryan, with the thick Irish brogue, who toted a bag of soccer balls onto the plane himself; the oversized men's kits that simply read "USA" on the back.

The first U.S. women's national team lost 1–0 to Italy on Aug. 18. Michelle Akers—the team's tournament standout who would later play on three U.S. World Cup teams—sat that match out with an ankle injury. Next, Team USA played to a 2–2 draw with Denmark. En route

"THE FANS
WERE
CHANTING
OOSA!
OOSA!
AT FIRST,
WE THOUGHT
THEY WERE
BOOING US."

to the third match, versus England in Caorle, the bus driver got lost. "We arrived just before kickoff and did not warm up," Wyant says. "We trailed 3–0 after 15 minutes, and I got yanked at halftime."

A rematch against Denmark ended in a 1–0 defeat. And yet, the Americans found themselves the crowd favorites. "They were chanting *Oosa! Oosa!*" says defender Stacey Enos. "At first, we thought they were booing us."

Oosa. U-S-A. It's the same cheer you hear at USWNT matches today. Six years after that first team's debut in Italy, the U.S. would win the inaugural Women's World Cup

in 1991, edging Norway 2–1 in a game of 40-minute halves, because FIFA felt women couldn't handle a full 90 minutes. Following the '99 World Cup—hosted by the U.S. and won on Chastain's famous penalty kick—women's soccer would see an explosion in popularity in this country.

On the flight home, Gancitano and Wyant sat in the cockpit with the captain, sharing cookies and milk and stories of their adventure. "We were disappointed with our record," says Wyant, who is now at NYU and is the only female coach of an NCAA men's soccer program. "But like a lot of things in life, it's the experience we remember most. We were not famous; no one knew we existed."

As Gancitano and Wyant returned to their seats, the captain made an announcement. Their fellow passengers applauded. —*John Walters*

JOETTA CLARK

TRACK AND FIELD

When Florida sophomore Talitha Diggs dashed across the finish line in 50.98 seconds on March 12 at the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships in Birmingham, she didn't simply win the 400-meter title. She captured a piece of history.

Thirty-nine years earlier, her mother, Joetta Clark, took home the NCAA indoor crown in the 800 meters, her first of nine overall titles during her storied career at Tennessee in the 1980s. With the 19-year-old sprinter's indoor title, the pair became the first mother and daughter to both win an NCAA championship in an individual event—a feat that squarely represents the wave of athletic opportunities that began to be afforded to women only after the passage of Title IX in '72.

Running became a family affair thanks to Joe Louis Clark, Joetta's father, the no-nonsense, inner-city New Jersey high school principal who was famously portrayed by Morgan Freeman in the 1989 movie *Lean on Me*. His tough love and unorthodox disciplinary measures

helped turn around one of the state's most troubled schools, and he took the same approach with his three children, particularly on the track. Clark pushed 12-year-old Joetta into distance running, not sprinting, because he sought to prove that Black people could succeed in longer races, too.

Armed with her father's tenacious spirit, Clark never lost an 800-meter race during her four years at Columbia High School in Maplewood, N.J., from 1976 to '80; in fact, to this day, she holds the state's outdoor record in the event. During her four years as a Vol, she

"IT WAS
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AT TENNESSEE."

was a 15-time All-American, a nine-time national champion and 10-time SEC champion. It wasn't until she arrived on campus that she realized the impact of Title IX. It was the first time she saw women in sports leadership roles.

"My track and field coach was Terry Crawford, Pat Summitt was doing basketball, Gloria Ray was the athletic director and Debby Jennings was the [sports information director]," Clark says. "It was inspiring to see all of these women in charge and winning."

After college, she became a four-time Olympian, running at the pro level for more than 28 consecutive years. By the time Clark entered in her final Olympics in Sydney 2000, her half sister, Hazel, 15 years her junior, was making headlines of her own in the half-mile distance and competing in her first Summer Games. By then, the path had already been paved. Hazel never had to fight for the amenities she enjoyed: the expensive equipment, the nice facilities, the chartered flights, the prestigious meets and more.



"To her, it was always like this. She didn't take it for granted, but it just didn't register," Clark says. "They think they've arrived. But my generation, we were far from arriving. So we had to press forward—as women, as Black women, as women running distance."

Now 59, Clark says it was the groundwork set by the women at Tennessee that inspired her current career as a motivational speaker and founder of the Joetta Clark Diggs Sports Foundation, which promotes participation in athletics. Just as she did with her sister, Clark reminds Talitha of the sacrifices that came before her, of the women who paved the way. "What I do now is very focused on what I saw then," she says.

—Jamie Lisanti

x 1 7



CAROL HUTCHINS

SOFTBALL

It was a Saturday in 1976, a day Carol Hutchins will never forget.

As a freshman basketball player at Michigan State, she was thrilled to be practicing for a rare game in the main gym, the Jenison Field House, as part of a doubleheader with the men's team. The session was barely underway when the men's opposing coach entered and demanded that the women get off the court.

Despite the team's scheduled time, the coach—whom Hutchins won't name except to say he's a "Hall of Fame, high-profile guy to this day"—gathered the team on the floor and repeated his order: "You need to get off this court, because nobody gives a damn about women's basketball."

"We were all pissed. It lit a fire under us," says Hutchins, 64, now in her 38th year as coach of Michigan's softball team, the winningest in the sport's NCAA history. "As women, we experience that [treatment] all across the board, in so many arenas."

A self-proclaimed "Title IX boomer," Hutchins, a Lansing, Mich., native, was entering 10th grade when the law was passed. As she grew up, more and more

gender inequities were being exposed. "It was a given that the men were treated better, that men were more important," she says.

By her senior year at Michigan State, Hutchins and her teammates were fed up. First, in a formal complaint letter, and later, in a 1979 lawsuit, they protested the school's "gross violations" of Title IX, citing not only the clear lack of funding for women's sports compared to men's, but the discriminatory differences in facilities, travel arrangements and more. It took nearly a decade to officially settle, but within two years of filing, female athletes did receive some small improvements, like new glass backboards and a dedicated locker room.

After graduating as a two-sport athlete in 1979, Hutchins earned her master's degree in physical education at Indiana and began her softball coaching career. She was an assistant coach for the Hoosiers ('81) and spent a year as head coach at Ferris State ('82), before finally landing at Michigan as an assistant ('83–84).

Hutchins recalls her first year as the head coach at Michigan, in 1985: She was hired on a part-time basis, a 10-month appointment at a \$3,000 salary that required her to split her time between athletics and a clerk typist role. "We all had other duties," she says of the female coaches at the time. "My job was to be the secretary for the women's athletic director."

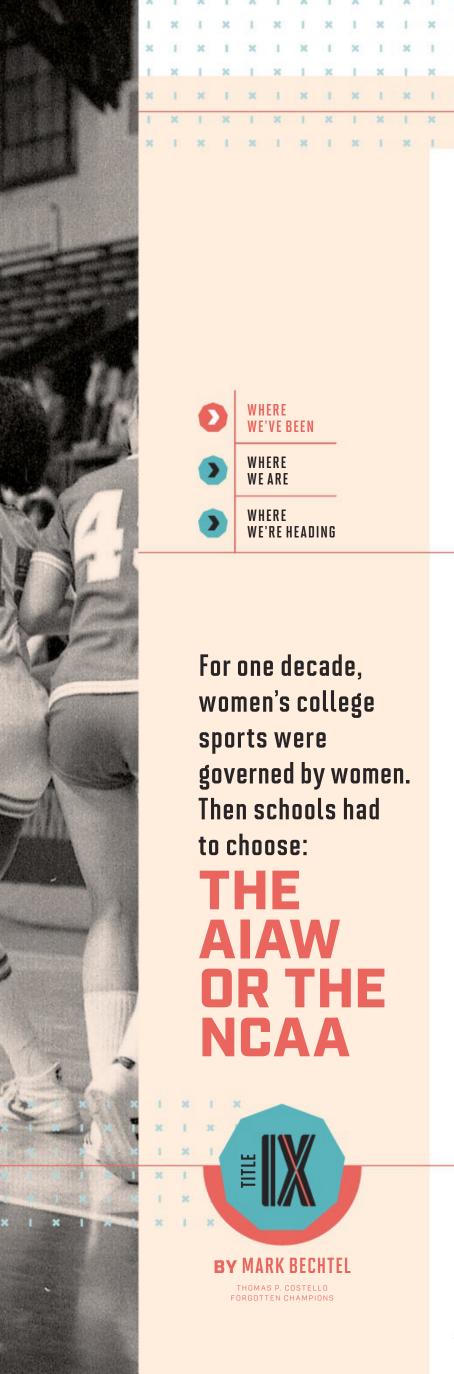
She also served as the grounds crew. While the men's baseball team had multiple full-time coaches, practice uniforms and a manicured field, Hutchins had to pull weeds, paint lines and maintain the subpar softball facility.

Now, more than four decades after that first complaint, "Hutch" boasts the most wins of any coach in Michigan history, 22 Big Ten titles as well as an NCAA championship—and she's as impassioned as ever about the fight for women's equality. She's adamant that the gender disparities in college athletics remain rampant, "getting alarmingly bigger, not smaller."

"It's really in recent years that I've realized that it is my duty to speak out," Hutchins says. "In all my salary disputes, when I spoke out, it was not because I needed more money to live. I don't need much. It's all about the women that come after me." —J.L.



LAST DANCE Hall (5) and Rutgers took on Texas in the final AIAW tournament championship game, held at the Palestra in Philadelphia.





ON MARCH 28, 1982, No. 7 Rutgers beat No. 5 Texas to win the country's most established women's college basketball tournament.

On March 28, 1982, No. 1 Louisiana Tech beat No. 2 Cheyney State to win the country's most competitive women's college basketball tournament. It was a strange day, but those were strange times.

For the first time in its history—and nearly 10 years after the passage of Title IX—the NCAA was sponsoring women's champion-ships. Until the 1981–82 school year, that had been the province of the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women, which both came into existence and held its first basketball tournament in '72. With the two governing bodies each offering a trophy, schools could choose their tournament. That Tech and Cheyney went with the NCAA—which offered more perks, such as paying for transportation—was no surprise. Of the top 20 teams, 17 made the same choice.

How Rutgers wound up in the AIAW has been lost to time. "It was definitely above our pay grade," says Mary Klinger, who, then known as Mary Coyle, ran point for the Lady Knights, playing alongside her twin sister, Patty. Even the team's coach, Theresa Grentz, isn't sure—the call came down from above and was never explained. "This was 1982," she says. "The reasoning I got was, *You're lucky you're even here.*"

As for Texas, though, there was never any doubt that the school whose women's sports were overseen by Donna Lopiano was going to ride it out with AIAW.

URING THE bubbled 2021 NCAA women's tournament, players highlighted on social media the wide gap between their facilities and the men's (page 50). Their posts sparked outrage—and pressured the NCAA into providing more equitable treatment this year. Similar pressure led to the women's tournament finally being able to use the sobriquet of "March Madness" this season. To Lopiano, this was nothing new.

50 YEARS OF TITLE IX

By the time she sent her Longhorns to the AIAW tournament in 1982, she had seen enough of the NCAA to believe that it wouldn't do right by women athletes—not unless it was made to.

She had grown up in pre—Title IX Stamford, Conn., playing sports with the boys on her street. "I don't think I knew I was a girl until they told me I couldn't play Little League baseball," she says. Donna had been first pick in the draft but was prohibited from playing because the league's bylaws banned girls.

So she played softball instead. Her dad, Tom, knew a scout for the Pirates who knew the coach of the Raybestos Brakettes, a local semi-pro fastpitch team. Tom had the scout come to dinner at his Italian restaurant, where ample amounts of food and—perhaps more significantly—Chianti were consumed. By meal's end, Donna had a tryout.

In the sober light of day, the scout appeared to have second thoughts about vouching for a 16-year-old, so the car ride to the

tryout was very quiet. When the drills started, he stayed in the car. But when he saw what Donna could do, he gradually moved closer and closer to the field, as if to say, *Look what I brought you guys!*

Lopiano spent the next 10 years traveling the world with the Brakettes as she completed her education, eventually earning a Ph.D. from USC. (She was inducted into the National Softball Hall of Fame in 1983.) She got a job in the athletic department at Brooklyn College in 1972, the same year the AIAW held its first hoops tournament.

The AIAW, composed almost entirely of women administrators, had been founded on a relatively simple ideal: Don't make the same mistakes the men did. In an effort to avoid scandal, AIAW coaches weren't allowed to recruit off-campus, and if a prospect visited a school she had to foot the bill. Scholarships were also forbidden until, ironically, the AIAW was sued for denying women the same opportunities men had (even then, scholarships usually covered only tuition, not the full ride of books and living expenses).

The first tournament was won by Immaculata, a small all-women school outside of Philadelphia that would win the next two as well. Home games featured nuns banging on buckets to create an unholy ruckus in a packed gym. Skirt-clad Grentz (the Rutgers coach, then known as Theresa Shank) was the team's star, and the Coyle sisters, who grew up on the Main Line, were among its fans. The team sold





LED BY WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS, THE AIAW WAS FOUNDED ON A SIMPLE IDEAL:

DON'T MAKE

THE SAME

MISTAKES THE

MEN DID.

GOOD KNIGHT

Mary Coyle (right) served as floor general while her sister, Patty, rang up 30 points in helping Rutgers to the 1982 AIAW title.

buttons—WE'RE GOING TO BE NUMBER ONE WE TRY HARDER—to fund their trip to the tourney.

A few weeks before that tournament tipped off, Birch Bayh, a Republican from Indiana, introduced legislation on the floor of the Senate that would seek to eliminate the need for teams to sell tchotchkes to fund their travels. Title IX (at the time labeled Title X) would, of course, go down in history as a landmark statute, though no one involved with sports knew it at the time.

The vaguely worded act makes no mention of sports, and no one knew it would apply to extracurricular activities until the NCAA's counsel thought to ask the question two years later. When the answer came back—yes—the NCAA sprung into action. And that action was to fight Title IX tooth and nail.

The worry was that forced funding of women's sports would dilute men's sports, especially football and basketball, which at most schools were the primary sources of athletics income. In 1974, John Tower, a senator from Texas, introduced an amendment that would exempt revenue-producing sports from Title IX. It passed in the Senate but was dropped in conference with the House. So in the summer of '75—after three years of legal wrangling over Title IX's enforcement—Tower introduced a bill with the same aims.

One of the statements entered into the record in favor of S.2106 was a letter from Nebraska football coach Tom Osborne, who wrote, "College

FATHER'S DAY GIFT GUIDE

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Breitling.com \$9,100 football has a tradition that goes back 100 years and has evolved into a sport that has great spectator appeal. . . . It would seem logical that women's athletics be allowed to grow and develop naturally along similar lines, in accordance with interest level, rather than to legislate into existence a large number of sports."

Among the witnesses called to testify before the congressional committee handling the bill was a self-described "naive" 29-year-old recently hired by Texas as its first women's athletics director: Donna Lopiano.

AIAW lawyers had called her because they figured she'd be able to get a hold of the Texas men's athletics budget (which approached \$2.5 million), as well as her own (which totaled \$128,000 and was partially funded in part by proceeds from campus Coke machines).

When asked to testify, Lopiano's initial reaction was, "My mother and father will be so proud." Then the morning she was to leave she got

a call from Lorene Rogers, the school's new president and the first woman to hold that office. Lopiano thought it was going to be a get-to-know-you chat. It began more ominously: *I understand you're going to Washington to testify about Title IX*.

"And the light went off," says Lopiano.

She asked Rogers, "Are you saying I shouldn't go?"

"No, no," said Rogers.
"I'm going to say how to keep your job."

Rogers reminded her that Tower was the best friend of the chairman of the UT Board of Regents, and that it would behoove her to pay the senator a courtesy call. Lopiano was also to make it clear that she was not representing the views of the University of Texas. "I said I



STEERED RIGHT

Immaculata played in the first AIAW title game (right); Lopiano was an advocate for its continued existence.

could do that," says Lopiano. "She said, 'Have a good time.' And I did."

On the stand, Lopiano was far from naive. After beginning with the

On the stand, Lopiano was far from naive. After beginning with the disclaimer that her views were her own, she attacked the bill's underlying assumption that an athletic department could not offer women a fair chance without cannibalizing the men's programs. "Besides taking issue with the insinuation of my lack of administrative ingenuity," she said, "I question whether this assumption is valid even under the most obviously discriminatory, unequal programs. For example, my situation at the University of Texas."

The bill died in committee, but the NCAA filed multiple lawsuits in the three years before schools were required to be in compliance with Title IX. The last one was dismissed in 1978, at which point NCAA leaders realized they were going to have play ball with women's sports. Also factoring into the NCAA's thinking was the fact that the AIAW was proving that women's sports were a viable TV commodity. (The '80 women's basketball title game would get better ratings than that year's NBA playoff action.)

And so the NCAA began talk of staging its own women's tournaments. Lopiano and the AIAW loyalists were steadfastly against the idea on the grounds that women's athletics would be largely run by men for whom women's athletics were not a priority.



There was, however, a faction of women's administrators who wanted to join forces with the NCAA, citing its deeper pockets, better television connections and established infrastructure. "Eventually we're going to have to get together," Nora Lynn Finch, the women's AD at NC State, said before the vote. "There are differences in rules now. The AIAW discriminates against women athletes because the NCAA allows men more in recruiting and scholarships."

The ultimate showdown came in January 1981, at the NCAA convention at the Fountainbleu Hotel in Miami. The debate on whether the NCAA should hold championships for women was intense. Arkansas athletic director and football coach Frank Broyles spoke vehemently against the idea, calling the NCAA's attempt to take over women's sports a "blitzkrieg." He likely



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just feared women's expenditures would cut into his budget, but that didn't matter to the AIAW crowd. "He wasn't doing it for the right reasons, but that was all right," Iowa director of women's athletics Catherine Grant said years later. "We adopted him at that convention."

The vote was a 124–124 tie. The recount showed that the nays had won 128–127. As Lopiano and her victorious allies met with writers, the pro-NCAA side came up with a plan. They realized that Cal had voted no at the urging of its women's athletic director. When she left the room, the NCAA backers approached the Bears' faculty athletics representative and convinced him to introduce a motion to reconsider.

The motion passed, and a new vote was called. Sensing the shifting winds, the delegates approved the measure by a count of 137–117. And that brought about one of the great ironies of Title IX: It indirectly led to women losing the authority to govern their own athletics.

Lopiano turned her attention to reforming the NCAA from within. "Athletes don't take their ball and go home," she says. (She stayed at Texas until 1992, leaving to head the Women's Sports Foundation.) But the AIAW had no choice but to go into what Lopiano calls "lawsuit mode," filing a futile antitrust suit against the NCAA as it planned what turned out to be the last basketball tournament it would stage.

HE 1982 AIAW final four featured a pair of regional rivalries. Grentz's Philly-heavy Lady Knights took on Villanova in the semis, while the Longhorns played Wayland Baptist, a small school in the Texas panhandle that was the most storied program in the sport's history.

In the 1950s, a local businessman named Claude Hutcherson who owned an airplane company adopted the team, flying them all over to play. The rest of the teams at Wayland were known as the Pioneers; the women's basketball team was called the Hutcherson Flying Queens. Recruits, often from rural outposts where commercial flights were rare, were dazzled by flights to visit the school. The Queens won 131 straight games from 1953 to '58 and were still a force in the '80s.

Their regional was in Berkeley. "Right before we went to California it had come out that we weren't going to be able to go [to the] NCAA and we were gonna have to go NAIA," says former player Darla Armes Ford. "My mom kept a scrapbook. THE GLORY YEARS ARE OVER FOR THE FLYING QUEENS is one of the articles I have."

And there's the second irony of Title IX. As more schools committed resources to women's athletics, the early adopters, the often small, local programs that outhustled everyone else when that—and maybe a fleet of airplanes—was enough to win, lost their status. As the stage got bigger, there was no room on it for Wayland Baptist. Or Immaculata, which now plays in the NAIA. Or Cheyney State, the Philadelphia-area school—and the nation's oldest HBCU—that reached that 1982 NCAA final. Two years ago, the school disbanded the team.

"It definitely is bittersweet," says Ford. "The Queens had a lot of history in getting the women's game to where it is now."

Wayland's chance to go out on top ended with a loss to Texas. Rutgers beat 'Nova to set up the final in front of a small but boisterous crowd at the Palestra, where the Coyle family hung a banner from the scoreboard that read WELCOME HOME. "We had come full circle," says Mary.

The AIAW had a deal to televise its championship with NBC—until the network switched sides. On March 28, 1982, it aired the NCAA final. The Longhorns and Lady Knights game was not televised.

The night before the game, Mary, Patty and another local native, Jennie Hall, went to the Finnegan playground in Southwest Philly for old time's sake. Mary ended up playing for two hours. "I think it was my way of dealing with the nervous energy," says Mary. "Patty and Jennie just watched like, You better not get hurt or Theresa will kill you."

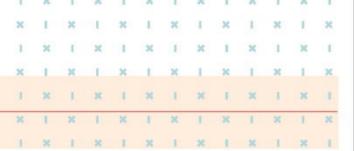
The point guard came through unscathed, and in the title game, Mary ran the show and Patty dropped a career-high 30 points as Rutgers pulled away late to win 83–77. The Lady Knights were champs, and they didn't care that it was of an organization that would soon be defunct. "AIAW had a lot of really good teams in it," says Patty. "You know, it wasn't like chopped liver."

No champagne flowed, but the players had the next best thing. "It was so hot and I was just sweating like crazy, but walking back to the hotel from the Palestra, I remember just meeting up with friends and fans," says Patty. "They gave me a beer." Later that night, Grentz took the girls out to dinner at Bookbinder's, a fancy restaurant, where she and her husband put the meal on three personal credit cards.

Before the Lady Knights left Philly, a couple of players handled one last piece of business. At the NCAA final in Norfolk, Va., they knew that Louisiana Tech had beaten Cheyney State, 72–62. They also knew that it had been a grueling year for the Cheyney coach, C. Vivian Stringer. In November she and her husband, Bill, had been told that their 1-year-old daughter, Janine, had spinal meningitis. She would never walk or talk and would require lifetime care. Stringer spent many nights sleeping in Janine's room at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, being brought changes of clothes by an assistant coach.

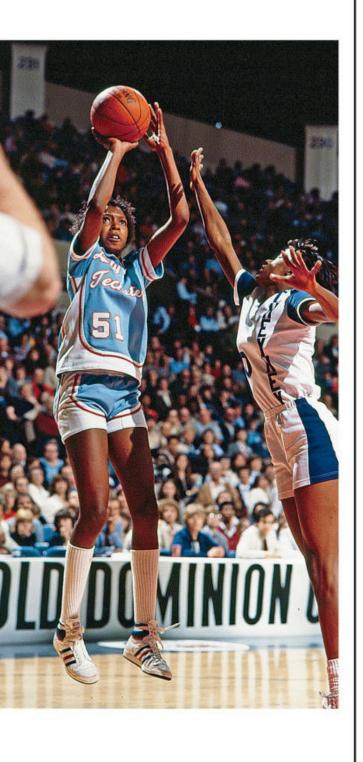
The Rutgers players took a toy stuffed bear and went to the Children's Hospital to visit little Janine and Bill Stringer, who had stayed home while Vivian was with her team. "It's the camaraderie, you know," Grentz says of her players' visit. "The camaraderie between the teams and the women who were coaching—we had our own sorority. We were there to take care of each other, to support each other."

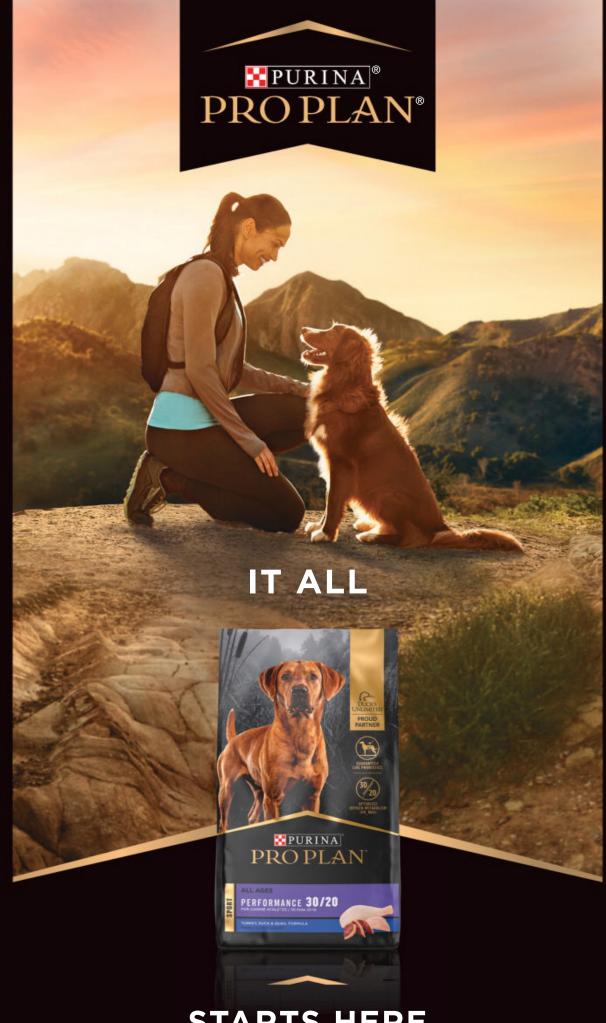




TECHNICAL KNOCKOUT

Janice Lawrence led the Lady Techsters in scoring during the first NCAA women's basketball tournament in 1982.





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BLAKE BOLDEN **scout**, los angeles kings

Bolden became the first Black woman to play professional hockey, in 2015, and the NHL's second female scout, in '20.

The 31-year-old barrier-breaker is passionate about diversifying the predominantly white sport on all levels.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ERICK W. RASCO









CLARISSA CHUN IOWA WOMEN'S WRESTLING COACH

In 1998, Hawaiʻi created the nation's first girls wrestling high school state championships, and 17-year-old Chun won the title. In November 2021, the Olympic bronze medalist was named the coach at lowa, the first Power 5 school to add women's wrestling as a varsity program.

PHOTOGRAPH BY
TODD ROSENBERG

ANGELA RUGGIERO COFOUNDER AND CEO OF SPORTS INNOVATION LAB

A four-time Olympian and 1998 hockey gold medalist, Ruggiero is a champion for equality in sports. The 42-year-old heads up a sports market research firm called the Sports Innovation Lab, which recently launched a data-driven campaign aimed at generating investment in women's sports.

PHOTOGRAPH BY BILLIE WEISS



IFEOMA ONUMONU NJ/NY GOTHAM FC

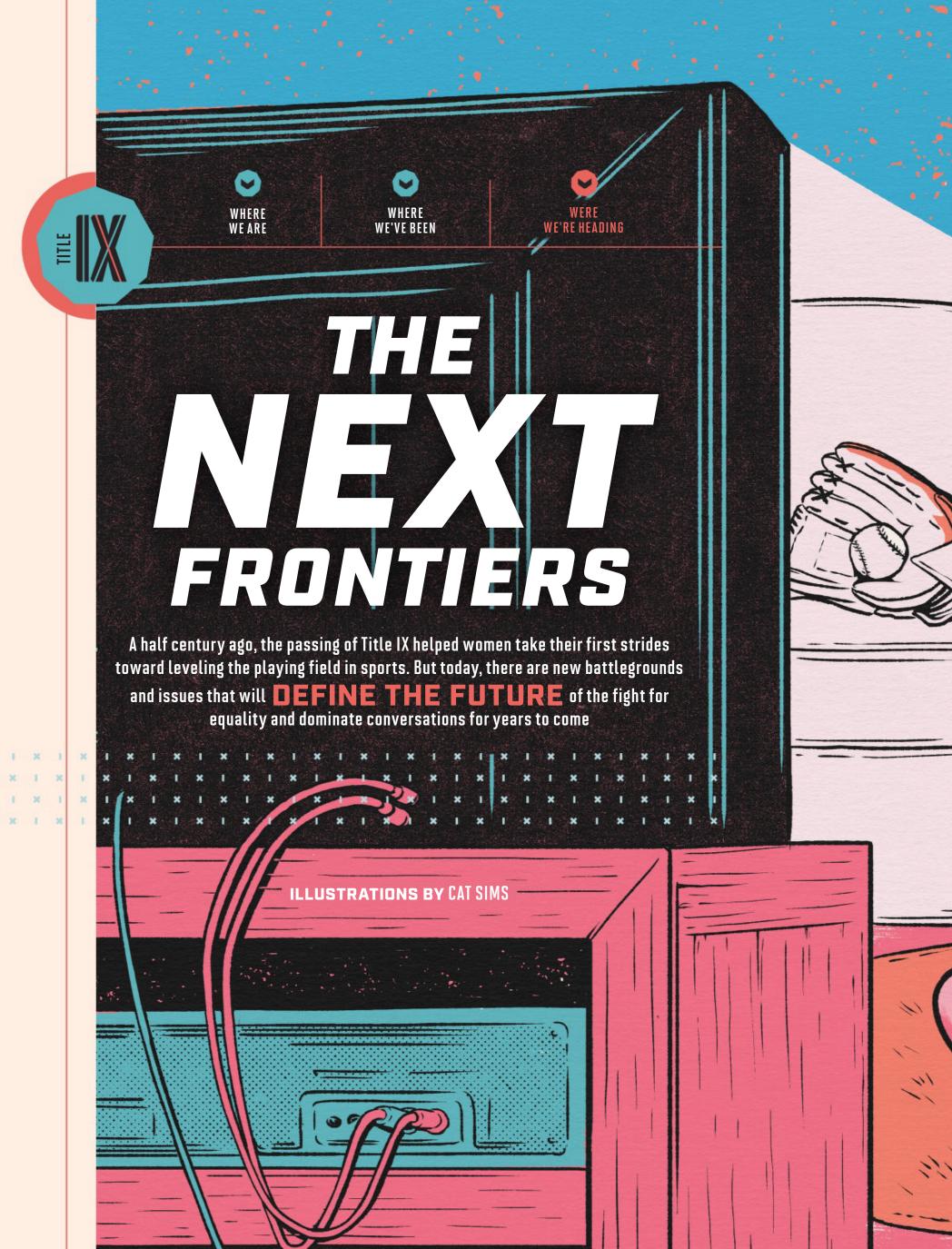
Entering her sixth pro season, the 28-year-old forward is cofounder of the NWSL's Black Women's Players Collective, which works to increase the image, value and representation of Black women and girls, both in soccer and generally as athletes and leaders.

PHOTOGRAPH BY LEBRECHTMEDIA











MEDIA COVERAGE

Participation in sports by young girls is often cited as an example of steady progress since Title IX was implemented, but there's one area, a half century later, that still remains stuck in the 1980s. Women's sports representation in the media is virtually unchanged, according to a study of coverage from '89 to 2019, published in March '21 in the peer-reviewed bimonthly journal, *Communication & Sport*. On TV news and highlight shows, including ESPN's *SportsCenter*, women athletes totaled only 5.4% of all airtime, a negligible difference from 5% in 1989 and 5.1% in '93. Take away the 2019 Women's World Cup and that number drops to 3.5%.

The report, titled "One and Done: The Long Eclipse of Women's Televised Sports," details gender asymmetries across networks and digital media. It found that men's sports (particularly the "Big Three" of basketball, football and baseball) received the majority of coverage, while women's sports typically got the "one and done" treatment, or a single story sandwiched between more extensive men's news items.

Despite the dismal findings, a ratings snapshot of just one major sports weekend in April of this year revealed what can happen when women are given premium airtime: The South Carolina–UConn national championship basketball game was the most-watched women's NCAA tournament final in almost 20 years, with 4.85 million viewers tuning in, an 18% jump from 2021 and 30% from '19. A day earlier, the NWSL Challenge Cup match between the San Diego Wave and Angel City FC drew 456,000 viewers, a mark that MLS has surpassed only twice through mid-April and that paces with the weekend's top soccer games of Leicester City–Manchester United (608,000), Newcastle-Tottenham (573,000) and Brentford-Chelsea (463,000).

That type of historic success is what the Women's Sports Network hopes to capitalize on, offering a simple solution to decades of vying for prime TV slots. Launching in June 2022—purposefully timed with Title IX's 50th anniversary—the 24-hour, ad-supported streaming channel from Los Angeles—based Fast Studios will air events from partners such as the LPGA, U.S. Ski and Snowboard, and World Surf League, as well as news and talk programming, including *Game On*, a daily studio show featuring scores and highlights.

"If you build it, they will come," says Carol Stiff, a 30-year ESPN veteran and Women's Basketball Hall of Fame inductee who is on the network's advisory board, along with Allyson Felix, analyst LaChina Robinson and USTA executive Stacey Allaster, among others. "We're putting [women's sports] where people can find it and not have to search for it," Stiff says. "That's what this network is going to be all about."

While recent numbers show the potential for a hungry audience, Stiff says the channel's benchmark for success will ultimately be its ability to attract advertisers, which will influence the investment in women's sports rights, programming, marketing and more.

"Until we get Madison Avenue to double down and spend money on supporting women's sports, I don't know where we will be 50 years from now. Hopefully not in the same place," she says. "That's going to be the driver here; that's what we've been missing. And that's what we need."

—Jamie Lisanti



SPORTS MERCHANDISE

When Sky shooting guard Kahleah Copper dropped 22 points in Game 3 of the 2021 WNBA Finals last October, Tyrone Palmer was in the stands, thinking the same thing he had so often that season: *Man*, *I wish I could buy her jersey*.

Palmer, a native Chicagoan and a social worker at a local high school, had embraced his hometown Sky as they grinded toward their first championship last season. He'd zeroed in on Copper as a favorite player—which, naturally, led him to seek out a jersey. But he was surprised to find that it was an impossible quest. The 27-year-old Copper was a starter in her fifth season with



MERCHANDISE IS
CRUCIAL TO BUILDING
COMMUNITY AND
VISIBILITY FOR A
LEAGUE, BUT MANY
FANS ARE FRUSTRATED
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for years. Merchandise can be a crucial part of telling the story of a league—not just as a revenue stream but as a marketing strategy, too, allowing people to broadcast their fandom to everyone they see. It builds a sense of community and boosts visibility.

There have been a few notable success stories here for the WNBA. (Hello, orange logo hoodies.) But there have been far more fans left frustrated, in search of supply to meet their demand. A snapshot of the W's official online store in mid-April showed 38 "ready to ship" jerseys available; the same section on the NBA's site offered 1,290 different options. Copper's jersey was the ultimate example. Even when the 2021 Finals MVP signed a multiyear extension with the Sky, there were no jerseys available.

"It was a small thing, but it was just frus-

trating," Palmer says. "I was like, *I want to give you my money; I will pay whatever markup there is.* But it just didn't exist."

The last two years have yielded some particular supply-chain issues, and the WNBA is still expanding its partnership with Dick's. But the league acknowledges that there is room for it to improve here.

"We have to do better at letting our fans know when they can get it, where they can get it," WNBA commissioner Cathy Engelbert said about merch at a news conference in February. "We look forward to seeing a difference on that in the next year or two."

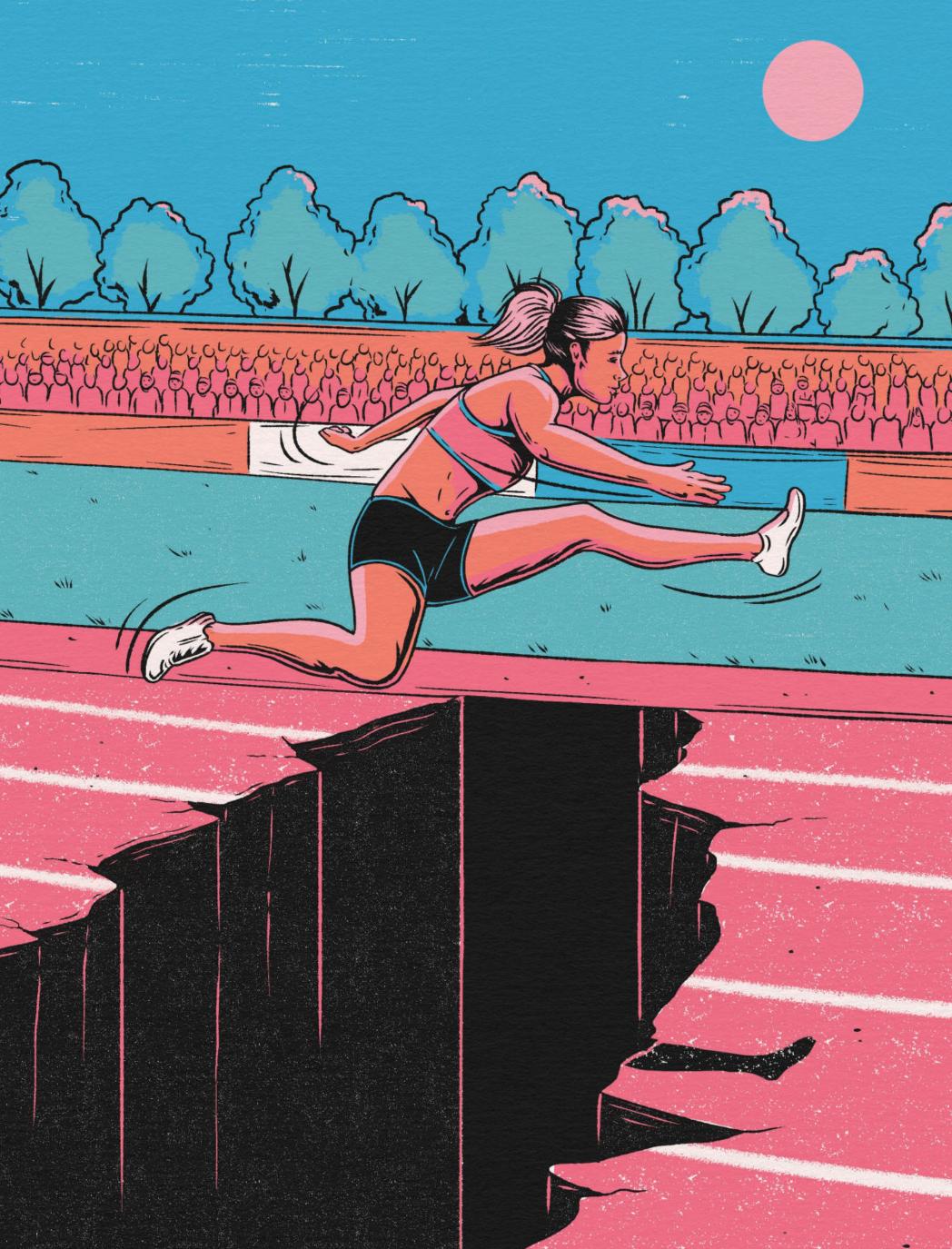
A few days after Engelbert's press conference, Kahleah Copper jerseys were finally, finally back in stock on the league's website. "It felt like a long journey," says Palmer with a laugh, describing what it was like to fork over his money at last. When the jersey eventually showed up at his door, he shared it on Twitter, collaging a picture of him smiling with the new gear alongside his frustrated pleas for it from the last few months. Copper herself saw the post and weighed in:

"The wait is ovaaaaaaa! Finally!" — Emma Baccellieri

the Sky and her sixth in the WNBA; it seemed obvious to him that some gear should be available with her name on it. Yet as the playoffs got underway, there were no Copper jerseys for sale through the Sky, the WNBA or official league merchandise partner Dick's Sporting Goods. And not just in Palmer's size—none, period. Adults and children, all sizes and all colors.

"I kind of just naturally assumed I would be able to find that," Palmer says. "At least, watching a lot of men's sports, if you want the jersey of a player—it exists."

And it wasn't just Copper. If a Sky fan watching the playoff run wanted to rep hometown legend Candace Parker? Too bad. Her jersey hadn't been restocked in months, either. It highlighted an issue the WNBA had been struggling with



EQUAL PAY

When the final whistle blew and sealed the victory for the U.S. women's national team at the 2019 World Cup, the fans in Lyon, France, erupted in cheers. But one chant in particular reverberated throughout the stadium: *Equal pay! Equal pay! Equal pay!*

The defining moment was a resounding reminder of soccer's gender disparities, but it also marked the start of a reckoning in women's sports that has been 50 years in the making. Since the passing of Title IX, the number of women's professional leagues has grown exponentially. But as demand increases, salaries have been slow to keep up, and the pay gap is still millions of dollars wide, with the average female athlete making anywhere from 15% to 100% less than her average male counterpart, according to an Adelphi University study last year.

The progress that's been made in shrinking that gap is due to the athletes, who still find themselves at the table fighting for their fair share from the major sporting bodies. In February, just weeks after the NWSL Players' Association reached its first CBA with the league and increased minimum salaries from \$22,000 to \$35,000, the USWNT won a six-year court battle, completing a \$24 million settlement with the U.S. Soccer Federation that (finally) guaranteed equal pay with the men's team. And in 2020, the WNBPA agreed to a CBA that secured higher salaries, made favorable changes to free agency and strengthened sponsorship opportunities.

But it doesn't stop at the professional level. Since going into effect in the summer of 2021, the NCAA's name, image and likeness rule has been a massive success for women. Although about two-thirds of NIL deals have gone to men, through March, 60% of the nonfootball deals have gone to women, according to a study by NIL company Opendorse. Women's basketball is second behind football, with women's volleyball, women's swimming and diving, and softball in the top six.

There is still room for improvement, however. The WNBA's prioritization clause—which says players must prioritize the W over international winter

leagues where they typically earn substantially more—goes into effect before the 2023 season and could be an inflection point for the league as players are forced to make a choice. And women's hockey players are still split between the Premier Hockey Federation (formerly the NWHL) and the Professional Women's Hockey Players' Association, neither of which will gain the NHL's official support until they are unified. Both the WNBA and the PHF have raised tens of millions to boost salaries and promote the leagues, offering at least some promise of growth.

As the gap slowly starts to look less like a steep cliff, there is significant reason for optimism. Athletes have more power than ever before. And for women, it's going a long way.

—Kristen Nelson

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TRANSGENDER ATHLETES

One big question looms over Title IX as the legislation enters its second half century: How does the statute apply to transgender athletes?

The group was not on most women's sports advocates' or the general public's radars in 1972. Sports were not even a main focus of Title IX when it was passed. But today, politicians and activists routinely invoke the law as the reason for banning trans athletes (often girls and women, in particular) from playing sports. The latest high-profile debate was sparked by the success of trans college swimmer Lia Thomas (SI, April 2022) for Penn this season.

At least 15 states currently ban trans athletes, ranging from middle school to college, from publicly funded sports that align with their gender identities. Lawmakers in those (largely conservative) states argue that trans women take scholarship opportunities away from cisgender women, and that they make for an unlevel playing field. These legislators say they are "protecting Title IX."

Those advocating for trans inclusion in sports also claim the mantle of Title IX, arguing that banning trans athletes from competing in their gender category is text-book discrimination on the basis of sex.

Upon taking office, President Joe Biden instructed his government that Title IX does prohibit gender-based discrimination against trans people. While that means trans people cannot be discriminated against in most educational settings, Western New England University Law School professor Erin Buzuvis, who specializes in Title IX issues, says it remains to be seen how Biden's direction will be applied to situations like sports, which we've accepted can be segregated by gender. That differs from, say, college admissions or French club, where there's no separation by gender. Meanwhile, in three of the states with trans sports bans-Idaho, Tennessee and West Virginiatrans athletes have joined with groups including the ACLU and Lambda Legal to sue for their right to compete.

Though Title IX isn't the law in question in the court cases, once they work their way through the system we may gain clarity on what and whom the statute protects.

That could take years, though, and, in the meantime, the fight over how Title IX applies to trans athletes will take place among activists, in the media and on the political battlefield.

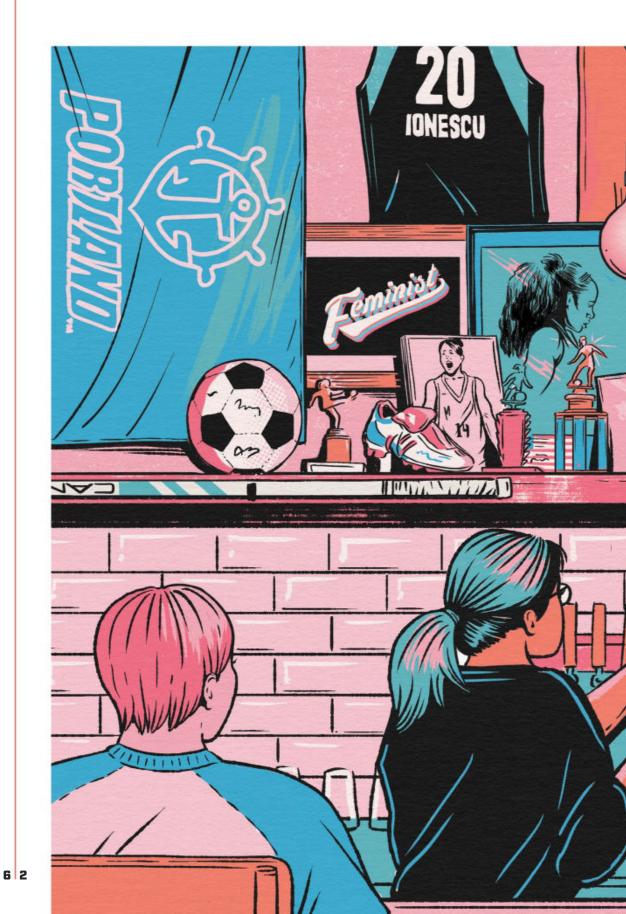
The stakes in this fight for trans people, already a vulnerable population, are high. The debate itself has already proved harmful. A 2020 peer-reviewed study found that trans and nonbinary youth who have experienced discrimination based on their gender identity are twice as likely to attempt suicide as their peers. And more than half of trans and nonbinary youth considered suicide over the course of the previous year, according to a '21 Trevor Project survey. In the same survey, 94% of LGBTQ youth reported that recent politics have negatively affected their mental health.

Along with the revival of the so-called bathroom bills and restrictions on transaffirming health care for youth, the antitrans sports laws are "about banning trans people and limiting our access to our everyday activities," duathlete and trans rights activist Chris Mosier told SI. "It's about erasing trans people from public view."

They are also about who holds the right to be a woman under Title IX. —Julie Kliegman

MAINSTREAM ACCEPTANCE

A few years ago, Portland chef Jenny Nguyen and her friends went to a sports bar for the NCAA women's basketball championship. The game was a blast. Yet their viewing experience left something to be desired—by request, a bartender changed the channel on one television to the women's title game, but Nguyen and her crew were relegated to the corner of the bar. And of course there was no sound. Nguyen and her friends were used to that. (Many women's sports fans are.) But she allowed herself to dream a little: What if it didn't always have to be like this?



Imagine if there was a bar—just one, somewhere, anywhere—with women's games as the default rather than the special request. Nguyen went home and tried to look it up. She couldn't find anything. So she decided to build it herself.

"It was kind of bittersweet," she remembers. "Like, sweet, here's a niche market that I feel can be really successful. And at the same time . . . there's been all this progress, but there wasn't a place like this already, which was mind-boggling."

Her creation, The Sports Bra, opened its doors in Portland in April. At a glance, it looks like any other sports bar, with memorabilia all over the walls and televisions showing games at all hours of the day and night.



But it's the first of its kind in the U.S.: Here's a place where women's sports are not made to feel like an exception. Instead, they're simply the rule.

The logistics can be a bit tricky. Given how little mainstream sports programming is devoted to women, getting a women's event on every television, every night, has meant collecting a hodgepodge of licenses and even directly reaching out to smaller leagues for permission to stream their games in a commercial setting. But that has yielded all kinds of happy surprises. Nguyen fondly recalls a weeknight of everyone in the bar getting into women's college bowling when it was the only thing on. And it has served as a reminder: There are lots of women's sports, and if someone's only willing to turn them on at a bar, people will sit down and watch.

While the menu includes an array of typical sports bar grub (think burgers, wings, nachos and tater tots), the list of signature cocktails features a handful of aptly named drinks—The GOAT, Title IX, Pickle Ball and Triple Axel—all featuring Freeland Spirits, a local women-owned distillery. The house wines are curated by Sarah Cabot, a winemaker who doubles as a running back for the Oregon Ravens, a women's pro football team.

Nguyen has been heartened by the early response. She rushed to hire more staff after the success of the opening weekend. It helps that she's tapped into an existing women's sports community in Portland: The local Thorns regularly lead the NWSL in attendance, and the city has plenty of women's college basketball fans, particularly of the Oregon Ducks. But Nguyen thinks this idea could work in many different cities, and she hopes that soon, it might not seem so revolutionary.

"I would be thrilled if other women's sports bars popped up," she says. "Or if every sports bar decided to dedicate one TV, just one TV in their whole bar, to women's sports, day in and day out—that, to me, would be a win. I feel like that's not asking a lot."

Nguyen scheduled the grand opening of The Sports Bra for the weekend of the women's Final Four. It felt like a full-circle moment from when she had been inspired to create the bar in the first place. Now, women's games were on every television the place was crammed with people and the volume was up. Yet she still couldn't hear the broadcast.

"It was so loud," Nguyen recalls, a grin spreading across her face. "It was like electricity." —E.B.



in February.



WHEN RAFAEL NADAL IS BACK ON THE ISLAND OF MALLORCA, WHERE HE WAS BORN AND RAISED, HE IS NEITHER A TENNIS STAR NOR A GLOBAL ICON.

HE'S RAFA, WHO'S SOMEHOW CONNECTED TO EVERYONE.

His parents eat at my nephew's restaurant. His sister was friends in school with my husband's sister. The selfie requests are minimal. Nobody cares what he's wearing (invariably, a T-shirt, shorts and sandals) or eating (bet on some form of seafood pasta). When he fills up his car in his hometown of Manacor or buys bait in Porto Cristo, he does so without eliciting interruption or awe.

There are, however, a few drawbacks to living among familiar surroundings and remaining part of your community. For instance, when Nadal leaves for a tournament, everyone in town knows that he's away. They know where he lives. They know that his plot of land—on a bay on the island's east side, leading to the Mediterranean—is a drop-dead-gorgeous spot, prime for both cliff jumping and hanging out. When Nadal returns from the road, he often finds forensic evidence that his property was public property. "The beer cans, especially," he says. "It means [kids] have a good time."

Last year, however, the locals didn't get much use out of Nadal's land, as the owner didn't spend much time away. And for a while it looked as if the kids of Mallorca would never again have months of free reign on the property. Ever since Nadal turned pro, 20 (gulp) years ago, his career has been pocked with injuries. Knee. Back. Arm. But the injury that flared up in 2021 was different. He'd had a rare foot injury, Mueller-Weiss syndrome, earlier in his career and had overcome it. But here it was again in his left foot, roaring back and bringing a stab of pain even when he walked around casually. Nadal's doctors feared the bone near the top of his arch was simply disintegrating.

The foot injury limited Nadal to just seven tournaments last season. And when he did play, he was far from

peak Nadal. It played a role in preventing him from winning the French Open for an absurd, mind-bending 14th time. By the end of the year, Nadal's ranking had faded; the pain had not. He was the winner of 20 majors over his gilded career, part of a three-way tie with Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic for the most of all time in men's tennis. He was 35 years old, happily married and realistic about it all. "I am thinking no one can play forever," he recalls. "If I don't play [again] I should be more thankful than sad."

But to the joy of countless fans—not least, those Mallorcan cliff-diving property squatters—Nadal left his island and got back on the road. His foot has, for the moment, stopped troubling him. A chest injury that sidelined him in April healed up as well. His confidence restored, he is, improbably, playing as well as ever heading into Paris, where he'll be the favorite.

This might be the most unlikely chapter in the account of his time on court. Because of his huevos-to-the-wall playing style, Nadal has always been always likened to the straight-ahead running back, who might turn in a few outstanding seasons but whose style was highly inconsistent with longevity. Federer once played in 65 majors without injury interruption. Nadal's longest streak? 13.

What's more, while Federer and Djokovic have always seen themselves as vital centers, athletes whose top rankings conferred a kind of authority, Nadal was always content simply being an athlete. He was plenty respected among his peers. But he would sooner double-fault on match point than wade into tennis's political snarl. Now, almost 36, he's emerged not just as the ATP's all-time majors leader, but also its leaders' leader, its outspoken moral force. Just when tennis needs him most.











TECHNICALLY, NADAL started his 2022 season on New Year's Eve. Having just kicked COVID-19—because he needed yet another obstacle—he landed in Australia to play a tune-up event in Melbourne. When he checked into his hotel room, he did not anticipate a 31-night stay. After a few days of practice, Nadal took to the court fully aware, he says, that his foot might flare up and he might soon be back in Spain.

He started tentatively but won that event without dropping a set. And with neither Federer nor Djokovic in the draw, Nadal suddenly became the Australian Open men's headliner. He warmed to the occasion. He met groups of kids on the court during practice sessions and dispensed life advice. While Djokovic became an international cause célèbre for his anti-vaccination stance, Nadal offered this: "We went through and are going through very challenging times worldwide, without a doubt, with this pandemic. I mean, I know tennis is zero important comparing what we are facing now, this virus, no? Tennis is just an entertainment sport for people, and for us is our job. In terms of importance in the world, is not important. . . . If there is any solution, and the solution is the vaccine, that's it." A smile never left his face. When he repeatedly offered the old standby, "I'm just happy to be here," it felt sincere.

At the Australian Open—a major he'd won only once before—he blazed through six opponents, each younger than him, sometimes significantly so. In the final, Nadal was the underdog against Russia's Daniil Medvedev, a decade his junior and winner of the previous major. Medvedev won the first two sets. Nadal then simply refused to leave the court without the title. He prevailed 2–6, 6–7, 6–4, 6–4, 7–5.

Nadal then won in Acapulco and reeled off five matches in Indian Wells before cracking a rib and losing in the final. Still, his record for the first 100 days of 2022: 20–1 with three titles. And that was before the start of clay season, when Nadal usually turns draws into boneyards.

Nadal is winning by playing the classics. Deploying his sui generis lefty game; the spin-drizzled shots that kick like a bronco; the thunderous offense; the relentless defense, neutralizing shots that would be clean winners against other, less dogged players. "Until you experience it for yourself," says Adrian Mannarino, a French veteran Nadal defeated earlier this year, "you can't imagine how hard it is to win points against him. He just gives nothing away."

There is also Nadal's sui generis mix of insecurity and self-belief. Nadal has long convinced himself that every match is a potential defeat. He confronts these stubborn doubts by bringing to bear supernatural levels of fight. For years this power of persistence won him all sorts of abstract praise, most often from opponents



Helping families focus on what matters most.

Aspen was only a year and ten months old when she was diagnosed with a stage 4 cancerous tumor. After a referral to St. Jude, her family traveled to the United States for the first time, where she received life-saving treatment. "It changed my perspective about life. There's so much kindness in the world. It's inspiring in a way that it challenges us, the recipients of this kindness, to give back," says Aspen's mother.

When you give to St. Jude, you're helping ensure that families like Aspen's will never receive a bill for treatment, travel, housing or food—so they can focus on helping their child live.



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COMEBACK KING

Nadal's renowned determination has allowed him to stay competitive even as injuries have stacked up.

and former players. He's a beast (Federer). He's money under pressure (Jim Courier). He's a stone-cold killer (Bob Bryan). Nadal's level of fixed determination during matches is jarring, even to his own coach, Carlos Moyá, a former No. 1 player. "If I had 50% of his intensity," says Moyá, "probably things would have been better for me."

Finally, there is some data on Nadal to back up what is obvious to the naked eye. The ATP has crafted an "under pressure" stat. In that category Nadal is No. 1., and it's not even close. He converts more break points—almost 45%—than any peer. When he faces break points, Nadal staves them off more than two-thirds of the time. He wins more than

two-thirds of his tiebreakers and three-fourths of his decisive sets.

Nadal is, by his own admission, a creature of habit. He has what he calls his "rituals," down to making sure his water bottles at the side of his chair are aligned just so. His practice sessions are famously intense, often lasting two hours, even in the middle of a tournament. They are also exercises in consistency. Says former Federer coach Paul Annacone, now a Tennis Channel commentator, "If you had watched [Nadal] practice as a teenager and watched him today, you'd see a lot of similarities."

Nadal has, essentially, kept the same team for his entire career. That includes his physio, Rafael Maymo, a native of Manacor whom Nadal hired in 2006, when Nadal was 20 and Maymo was 26. Given the bodily wear and tear Nadal was absorbing, there were whispers he should hire a more experienced and credentialed physical trainer. Nadal wouldn't hear of it, explaining that there was no replacing the trust he had in Maymo. With Nadal still winning majors closer to age 40 than 30, the results speak for themselves.

Yet Nadal doesn't get sufficient recognition for his willingness to make small changes. Like a technician going down to the basement and tinkering, he has added dimensions to his game. A flicking backhand volley here, a twist to his serve there. Nadal paired with Spanish player Marc López to win the gold medal in doubles at the Rio Olympics in 2016. When Lopez retired last year, Nadal invited him onto his team.



"MY FAMILY NEVER ALLOWED ME TO BREAK A RACKET.... THE MOST IMPORTANT THING WAS THAT

I GROW [UP] WITH THE RIGHT VALUES."

In his ever-improving English, he sounds like a business leader (which he effectively is) when he sizes up the operation. "You want to have [faith] in what you are doing and know the history," he says. "But you also want to be open to change and new ideas and new people."

This recent blast of success often has Nadal looking backward. Asked recently for the origin story of his oncourt aura, he paused to reflect and offered this, typical of both the depth and length of public statements lately:

"The reason I have the right self-control or I have the right attitude or fighting spirit during my whole career is simple, because I grow with this kind of education. My uncle, my family, never allowed me to break a racket, never allowed me to say bad words or give up a match. They didn't care much about winning or losing, but the most important thing was the education, and that I grow with the right values."

Nadal is also looking to the future, and not necessarily his. He has been cautious not to gush too much, which would only stoke the hype, but Nadal is thrilled by the ascent of Carlos Alcaraz, a Spaniard who just turned 19 and is the brightest prospect in men's tennis since . . . 19-year-old Spaniard Rafael Nadal broke out in the spring of 2005. Alcaraz, says Nadal, "has all the ingredients to become a major champion, no?" That Nadal so clearly influenced Alcaraz—from his modest disposition, to his commitment to breaking the Spaniard-as-clay-courter stereotype—is a special source of pride.

THE EMERGENCE of Nadal—and emergence of a proto-Nadal—couldn't have come at a better time for men's tennis. Federer remains a dignified and diplomatic figure, but his presence and sphere of influence have diminished, as he recovers from a series of knee injuries. Now north of 40 years old and a father of four, Federer hasn't won a tournament of any size since 2019. The received wisdom is that he will retire this fall.

The longest-tenured No. 1 player, Djokovic is all too eager to replace Federer as men's tennis's benevolent despot. But he has proved time and again he is not up to the task. Sensationally talented as he is at hitting a tennis ball, he has similarly ionospheric powers of self-sabotage. The lone player in the ATP's top 100 to refuse the COVID-19 vaccination, he starred in an international circus in Australia before ultimately being deported.

Unable to enter most countries until spring, Djokovic played only two matches in the first 90 days of the year. Though he will come to the French Open as defending champion, his reception will not exactly recall Lindbergh alighting in Paris in 1927. And given Djokovic's eagerness—and this is no knock—for public approval, one wonders how adverse crowds will impact his tennis.

The younger generation hasn't helped much, either. Sasha Zverev, the abundantly talented 25-year-old German ranked No. 3, is the subject of a domestic violence investigation and is playing on the ATP's equivalent

of double-secret probation after whacking his racket against an umpire's chair at the Mexican Open. Medvedev briefly overtook Djokovic in the No. 1 slot. Unfortunately, that ascent occurred the same week his country invaded Ukraine; instead of being celebrated for his feat, Medvedev faced questions about whether he should even be allowed to compete unless first denouncing President Vladimir Putin. Medvedev has struggled ever since and will miss up to two months of action after undergoing hernia surgery. He has also, along with all other Russian and Belarusian players, been banned from playing Wimbledon.

Into the void steps Nadal. Athletes are supposed to be more jaded and less accessible as they age; Nadal has gone the opposite direction. The most focused and passionate competitors are supposed to be the first to burn out; Nadal's matches still come across as sponsored content for intensity. The most physical player in tennis history never was supposed to be this durable.

By his own admission, Nadal will never have Federer's easy grace or Djokovic's crisp precision. But on he goes. All of which makes for a good reminder that in tennis, as life, magic comes in many forms.

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FOR A FEW DAYS IN 1943, THE RUMOR ROCKETED
AROUND THE CAMP RITCHIE MILITARY TRAINING CENTER
IN THE MARYLAND HINTERLANDS.

THE SCUTTLEBUTT WENT SOMETHING LIKE THIS:

A FAMOUS AND CARTOONISHLY MUSCLED PROFESSIONAL WRESTLER,

WHO LATELY HAD BEEN MOONLIGHTING AS A MOVIE STAR, WOULD BE GIVING THE NEW SOLDIERS A CRASH COURSE IN HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT BEFORE THEIR DISPATCH TO THE WESTERN FRONT.

It was, of course, preposterous on its face—the World War II equivalent of, say, The Rock suddenly showing up at basic training as an instructor. Then again, the entire tableau was already a study in surrealism, a straight-out-of-Hollywood conceit. Camp Ritchie had been a vacation resort, framed by the Blue Ridge Mountains, just under the Pennsylvania state line. After the war broke out, though, it was quickly morphed into a military intelligence training center. The U.S. Army recognized the need for translators and interrogators who spoke fluent German and understood the culture of the enemy. What better location to train than this, nestled unassumingly in the countryside but easily accessible to D.C.'s decision makers?

Camp Ritchie's soldiers, such as they were, did not exactly cut the figure of G.I. Joe. Many of the recruits were not only new to the United States military, they were also new to the United States. And a large subset were German immigrants who now were preparing to fight in and against their country of origin.

The Ritchie Boys, as these outsiders were quickly shorthanded, were mostly intellectuals, more likely to have reported for duty equipped with musical instruments and books than with guns and knives. And now they were going to be trained by a pro wrestler?

That rumor crossed the DMZ into truth one afternoon when a few cadets walked by the camp's phone booth. There they saw a man, shorn of his famous beard, per Army rules, but instantly recognizable for his sheer girth. He was roughly the size of one of the bluffs that sprung up behind the camp, and here he was, on the exterior of the glass cube, extending one

arm inside, yanking out the receiver. Unable to squeeze in his 320-pound frame, this was the only way that Frank Simmons Leavitt—Man Mountain Dean, as he was widely known outside of Camp Ritchie—could place a call.

As the name implied, Man Mountain was a considerable physical specimen. He doubled many of the other soldiers in weight. Though he stood a modest six feet tall, he still had eight inches on the median Ritchie Boy. And while Leavitt's precise age remains a source of debate, he likely arrived at Camp Richie in his early 50s, making him a full three decades older than many of his trainees.

When World War II broke out, Man Mountain had been coming off the height of his popularity. Not much earlier, he was pinballing around the country—and then the world—as a bearded babyface, theatrically tossing opponents out of the ring, flattening them on the canvas. For this he could command upward of \$1,500 a night, which was more than the *annual* per capita income in the U.S. at the time. And when Leavitt wasn't inside the squared circle, he was on the silver screen, starring in movies and working as a stuntman.

For all of these surface differences, though, Leavitt was, by all accounts, beloved by the Ritchie Boys. He had charisma to burn, and the kind that rarely intimidated. Soldiers listened raptly to his stories about wrestling romps through venues familiar to them across Europe. They gawked as he put on heroic eating displays. Here was an American celebrity dispensing Americanized nicknames—every Gustav became a Gus—and teaching them slang.

Man Mountain, though, wasn't just the equivalent of the cool camp counselor. He was also a brutally effective teacher. According to K. Lang-Slattery, who wrote SPORTS
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about the Ritchie Boys in her book *Immigrant Soldier*, Leavitt's charges "soon got over their awe of the huge and famous instructor. From him, they learned how to fight the enemy, individual against individual."

As U.S. military documents have been gradually declassified in recent years, the full effectiveness of the Ritchie Boys has come into sharp relief. This extraordinary unit was responsible for more than half of all combat intelligence gathered on the Western Front, their work pivotal to the Allies' victory. They were fanned out into other military units abroad and proved the most improbable of war heroes. And the identity of their comically oversized mentor and instructor—well, that, too, was wildly unlikely.

FANK LEAVITT was born in the Hell's Kitchen neighborhood of Manhattan, a few blocks from the theater where his father was a stage manager for Broadway impresario George M. Cohan. Even as a young

boy, Frank was monstrously large; in his early teens, he was assumed to be a full-grown adult.

He wasn't, but that didn't curb—and may have intensified—his desire to enlist well before World War I broke out. After allegedly paying a down-and-out stranger on the Bowery to impersonate his father and sign in person the necessary papers, Leavitt was accepted into the Army.

(This contributed to the mystery around his birth-date, which is generally recorded as June 30, 1891.) He ended up doing five terms of service, across nearly two decades, under General John J. Pershing, including a stint on the Texas side of the Mexican border. He was then sent to France, where he saw action.

Leavitt would later say that his education ended in the fifth grade, which is effectively true, even if he was recruited after the Great War to play college football. "I attended five colleges," he claimed, "but never went to class." In 1921 he played for the New York Brickley Giants in what would become the National Football League, and he was said to have faced Jim Thorpe.

Leavitt, though, was truly seduced by a different sport that was piercing the American consciousness—one that was, potentially, far more lucrative. Given Leavitt's theater upbringing, he found great appeal in pro wrestling's combination of athleticism and dramatic flair. And he enjoyed interacting with the crowd in a way he never could as a football player.

He started out as Soldier Leavitt, a nod to his time in the military. And in the early days, as fans grappled with whether his new sport was real or staged, the principals performed at an astonishing clip. At one event in 1919, Leavitt reportedly beat 19 men to win the King's Wrestling Tournament in London. "Lots of times," he later told *The Atlanta Constitution*, "I fought 14 bums in one day."

The Hell's Kitchen kid who snuck into the Army, became a pro wrestler and then played against Jim Thorpe—it's tempting to deem Leavitt a figure worthy of Damon Runyon. Except that, in this case, it was literally true. Runyon, the old newspaperman, was a close friend, and he conferred on Leavitt one early in-ring nickname, Hell's Kitchen Hillbilly, thinking his pal needed something more exotic than a military reference. Leavitt committed to the redneck motif, growing a comprehensive beard—"a facial hedge; a thick, dusky shrubbery," one newspaper reporter called it—and then hit the road.

When it became clear that Hell's Kitchen Hillbilly was an oxymoron that confused fans, Leavitt pivoted to Stone Mountain, a nod to the precipice outside Atlanta.

LEAVITT'S SIGNATURE MOVE: HE "PLOPPED THE SOUTH END OF HIS MASSIVE CARCASS KERPLUNK ON THE VICTIM'S TUMMY."

However, when Leavitt toured Germany in the 1920s, promoters complained that Stone Mountain was meaningless. Which is how Leavitt landed on Man Mountain.

By the end of that decade, though, the sport was wearing the Mountain down. A series of injuries sidelined Leavitt from wrestling, and he headed to Miami, where he took a job as a policeman. Surely Florida's largest traffic cop, Leavitt was stationed one day on the corner of Flagler Street and Second Avenue when he bumped into a young out-of-state visitor, Dorris Dean. Or she bumped into him. According to newspaper accounts, Dean almost clipped Leavitt with her car while he was directing traffic. He forgave her, and they began dating. "I gave her hell," he once said, "and then I married her."

In 1930, barely a year after their nuptials, Leavitt was fired from the force on account of his close friendship with Al Capone. One account, in the *Miami Herald*, noted that Leavitt was summarily dismissed for "conduct unbecoming"

an officer" after he admitted to making several trips to the crime boss's home in Palm Island. Leavitt tried to draw a line, telling the *Tallahassee Democrat*: "We were friends, all right... but they said I was a Capone gangster."

Suddenly unemployed, Leavitt retreated to Norcross, Ga., home of Dean's family estate, and then to the wrestling ring, where he embraced the sport's theatricality more lustily than ever. *The Atlanta Constitution* described his signature move, the "blimp fall," thusly: "After he had airplane-spun and bodyslammed his adversaries to the floor, instead of applying the ensuing body block conventionally with arms and legs, he leaped high into the ozone, distended his limbs and plopped the south end of his massive carcass kerplunk on the victim's tummy."

Dean, meanwhile, convinced her new husband to take on her maiden name, as it sounded more Anglo-Saxon than Leavitt. She was especially concerned that if he Among them: Man Mountain Dean claimed to be the first wrestler to lose a match without laying a hand on his opponent. In Madison Square Garden, in the 1930s, he was supposed to wrestle 6' 7" Roland Kirchmeyer, but as Man Mountain made his way up the aisle he was confronted by Joe Savoldi, a wrestler from the previous bout (and a former football player himself, under Knute Rockne at Notre Dame and George Halas with the Bears). "Go on up there and take yer beating, ya fat slob," Savoldi barked. Man Mountain stopped, in his words, "So I could reach out and sock him into press row. A typewriter slits his eyebrow open. And before I can get into the ring to fight Kirchmeyer, I'm disqualified."

Other times, by the script, he got as bad as he gave. In the late 1930s, in San Francisco, Man Mountain took on "Wild Bill" Longson, the wrestler credited with inventing the piledriver. Leavitt outweighed his opponent by nearly







wrestled in Nazi-led Germany, authorities might erroneously think he was Jewish. She also took over the role of managing him. And while her primary duties were scheduling bookings and overseeing finances, she didn't always stay on the sidelines. Per the *Tallahassee Democrat*: "When opponents get too rough, she goes into the ring herself with [a] chair, or water bucket, or whatever impromptu weapon comes [in] handy."

Under promoter Jack Pfefer—a colorful character in his own right who came to the U.S. in the 1920s as a musician in a visiting Russian opera troupe—the newly christened Man Mountain Dean traded on a military background, a biblical beard and a beguiling combination of New York bona fides and Southern charm. Sometimes he was the face, other times the heel. (He was once suspended from wrestling in California for "being such a mean cuss.") And it all rendered him a main-event-caliber star, who reportedly wrestled in 6,783 matches by the end.

MOUNTAIN OF FUN

Leavitt showed off his muscle in feats of strength, in the ring (against Chief Little Wolf, in 1936) and on screen, as himself.

100 pounds, and at one point—either by stomping on him or throwing him out of the ring—he "broke" Longson's back. Longson, the plotline went, returned home to Salt Lake City, recuperated and donned a plum-colored mask to resume his career under the name The Purple Shadow. He requested a match against Man Mountain Dean and—revenge!—broke choreography, contorting Man Mountain and snapping his left leg. Then he removed his mask.

It was around this time that wrestling's popularity in the U.S. hit a snag. Historians pinpoint the precise moment: On March 2, 1936, Danno O'Mahony fought Dick Shikat for the World Championship at MSG. Shikat, a heel who was assigned to lose, departed from the script and applied a hammerlock to O'Mahony. And O'Mahony, his lack

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of true skill exposed, was forced to submit. The famed "double cross" eroded fan confidence and undermined "the trust"—akin to "the commission" of the underworld leading to the creation of various vague organizations.

Back in Georgia, "rehabbing" his leg, and with his sport suddenly on the wane, Leavitt pivoted to acting. Having grown up a neighbor of George Raft—who went on to become one of the great Hollywood stars of the time— Leavitt had always been seduced by the film industry, and now he was able to use his imposing physique and his flair for the dramatic to break into the business, starting with a 1933 job in the U.K. as Charles Laughton's stunt double in The Private Life of Henry VIII.

Over the next two decades, Leavitt appeared in dozens of films, the most notable of which had him portraying himself alongside the popular comedian Joe E. Brown. In that 1938 movie version of *The Gladiator*, based on the book that inspired the Superman comics, Brown played a college student who takes an experimental drug that promises superhuman strength. In the end, he challenges Leavitt to a wrestling match . . . just as the drug wears off.

By the time Leavitt reached his 40s, though, that filmfriendly body was beginning to betray him. Already wealthy, he dialed back the wrestling. Off the road, he returned to Norcross—coincidentally, not far from Stone Mountain and became a sort of gentleman farmer, working a 20-acre plot of land alongside the Buford Highway.

He enjoyed the role of small-town celebrity, gladhanding and promoting local theater. One longtime Norcross resident would later recall that, as a boy, he encountered Leavitt at the town hardware store. There a group of men expressed doubt that Leavitt was as strong as he purported to be on the big screen and in the wrestling ring, and a wager followed. The men bet \$10 that Leavitt couldn't straighten a horseshoe, whereupon one was retrieved from the town blacksmith. The horseshoe was promptly straightened, and \$10 was handed over.

In 1938, Leavitt ran for a seat in the Georgia state legislature, representing Gwinnett County; then he withdrew. Ironic for a man who'd spent decades playacting the heel, he had no taste for the battle of politics, and he resented his opponent's verbal attacks. Leavitt would eventually study journalism at the Atlanta branch of the University of Georgia. He refereed local wrestling matches. After a quarter century of wrestling—and all that travel—Leavitt took to life in repose.

Then, in December 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor.

T THE BEGINNING of World War II, the U.S. military considered so-called "enemy aliens" to be a security risk. Immigrants from Germany, Japan and Italy were ineligible to enlist. But after a few months of fighting,

tactics changed. Recognizing that anyone who knew the enemy's language and culture could be a useful asset, the Army established a new secret military intelligence installation in bucolic Camp Ritchie, Md., where the largest subset of its 11,000 thick-accented recruits were German-born Jews who'd fled to the U.S. to escape Hitler.

Says David Frey, a history professor at West Point and the director of that campus's Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies: "The most important part of the [Ritchie Boys'] training was that they learned to do interrogation of civilians and prisoners of war. But they also did terrain analysis . . . photo analysis and aerial reconnaissance analysis. They did translation. They did night operations. They did counterintelligence."

In anticipation of their seeing action, particularly on





ACT OF WAR

Leavitt (at the podium) leaned on his stage background in elaborate re-creations of Nazi rallies that were meant to brace the troops.

the Western Front, these unlikely new soldiers first had to be trained. And for that they had an instructor who was, at once, born for the job and almost comically unlikely.

When the U.S. entered World War II, Frank Leavitt told a friend, "I know what I have to do." Though already in his early 50s, he reenlisted. He was too old for active duty, but one officer had an idea: At Camp Ritchie, Leavitt could bring to bear his experience, his accumulated wisdom and his outsized personality.

At the secret camp, where he arrived ranked master sergeant, Leavitt was immediately an object of curiosity. The Ritchie Boys included the likes of J.D. Salinger, David Rockefeller, John Kluge and Eugene Fodor, and they would go on to esteemed careers in literature, banking, media and travel writing, respectively—but at the time they were new Americans and sons of immigrants, as young as 19, and they were awed by the resident celebrity. As one Ritchie Boy, Burton Hastings, would later put it: "[Leavitt] was the hero of our era. We all knew about him."

As part of his work, Leavitt taught these admirers, among other things, hand-to-hand combat. Lang-Slattery quotes one Ritchie Boy, Gerd Grombacher, recalling that Man Mountain taught him how to kill an enemy with a stiletto knife—"and how to make it so clean that it wouldn't even hurt."

Leavitt also put his acting chops to good use. As part of the training, Camp Ritchie featured an ersatz German village, replete with enemy tanks made out of cardboard. And, according to military historian Beverley Eddy, one of Leavitt's jobs was to play the role of Hermann Göring,

night: "I never calculated that there is such a thing as terror, fear," he says. "So I experienced, viscerally, fear." The Ritchie Boys would go on to help liberate France, fight in the Battle of the Bulge and then help liberate the concentration camps. Overall, they were responsible for an unquantifiable trove of valuable battlefield intelligence, critical to the Allies' victory.

After the war, many stayed in Europe to help denazify Germany and work as translators at the Nuremberg trials. Many, too, used their Camp Ritchie training and went on to become spies and CIA agents.

"We look at this group and we see true heroes. We see the greatest of the Greatest Generation," says Frey, the West Point professor. "These are people who made massive contributions, who helped shape—who stretched—the idea

LEAVITT TAUGHT SOLDIERS HOW TO KILL AN ENEMY WITH A KNIFE, "AND HOW TO MAKE IT SO CLEAN THAT IT WOULDN'T EVEN HURT."

commander of the German Luftwaffe, in mock "Hitler rallies" that were meant to introduce enlistees "to the fanaticism of the Nazi party."

Not everything was so dark. Lang-Slattery recounts an exchange between two Ritchie Boys at the PX, or post exchange. At one point Leavitt sauntered by the onbase retail store, and one G.I. dared another to challenge Man Mountain to a fight. Leavitt didn't even need to stand up. From a sitting position he lifted the brave soldier up by the collar and threw him to the ground. The man was so humiliated and angry about the dare—and so clearly unable to retaliate—that he slugged his friend instead.

Dan Peterson, a longtime BYU professor whose father passed through Camp Ritchie, recalls another tale that his dad used to tell of soldiers sleeping in the barracks, awoken to high-decibel snoring. As the story goes: One of those soldiers demanded to know who was breathing "like a damned freight train." And a booming voice responded, "That was *me*." Says Peterson: "[Leavitt's] answer fully satisfied the curiosity of the angry complainer, and Father recalled with amusement that nobody else in the barracks ever complained thereafter."

In 1944, most of the Ritchie Boys headed off to Normandy, where one of Leavitt's charges, now 98-yearold Victor Brombert, a retired professor and dean at Yale and Princeton, remembers the terror of being strafed at of what it meant to be American. We should recognize the great diversity of those who played a role in the American army, and continue to do so."

FTER THE WAR, Frank Leavitt returned to his estate outside of Atlanta. On May 29, 1953, when he was 62, he finished up some yard work outside his home. He sat on the couch to listen to a baseball game on the radio. And then he complained that his chest hurt. Within minutes he had suffered a fatal heart attack.

Edwin Pope, then a cub reporter at the *Constitution*— and later a towering figure in U.S. sports journalism— was assigned to write the obituary. He called Leavitt "the most fabulous wrestler of his time." Few, though, would know the whole of it.

Leavitt did not, by all accounts, speak much about his time at Camp Ritchie. That intelligence was classified. Long after his death, even family members had no idea that the contributions Uncle Frank made to the national fabric were, well, truly mountainous.

So, of course, was the irony of it all. An American archetype spends decades following the crafted choreography of early professional wrestling and the scripts of early Hollywood. Meanwhile the unscripted version of the life story he authored himself was richer and more meaningful.

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POINT AFTER

GROWING GAINS

The summer of 1997 saw two significant moments in women's sports.

The WNBA played its first game on June 21; two days later was the 25th anniversary of the passage of Title IX. The two remain inextricably linked, as the legislation ultimately helped extend the visibility of women's basketball, cultivating a fan base that could support a league that is not just growing, but thriving. As the W enters the second quarter century of its existence, these 12 upcoming stars who were selected in the 2022 draft will help lead the way.

▶ PHOTOGRAPHS BY ABBY NICOLAS



1. RHYNE HOWARD DREAM | 2. EMILY ENGLSTLER FEVER | 3. KIERSTAN BELLACES | 4. NAZ HILLMON DREAM | 5. DESTANNI HENDERSON FEVER | 6. NALYSSA SMITH FEVER 7. VERONICA BURTON WINGS | 8. NYARA SABALLY LIBERTY | 9. RAE BURRELL SPARKS | 10. NIA CLOUDEN SUN | 11. ELISSA CUNANE STORM | 12. SHAKIRA AUSTIN MYSTICS



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5 KEY ELECTROLYTES



MUSCLE SUPPORT



*Pedialyte Sport has 1380mg sodium and no more than 14g sugar per liter; leading sports drink has ~460mg sodium and ~58g sugar per liter.

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